AFTER THE BATTLE

MARKET GARDEN CORRIDOR TOUR

THE CAPTURE OF BOULOGNE

CARVE HER NAME WITH PRIDE

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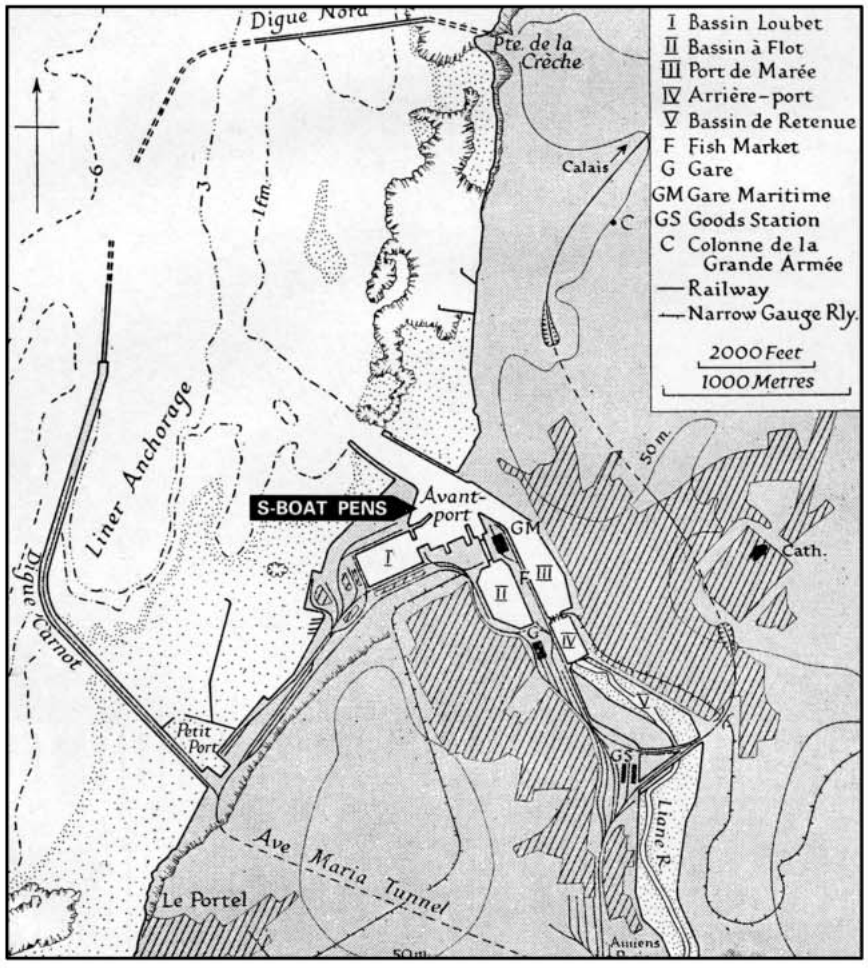
Front Cover: The 50th anniversary Market Garden Corridor Tour flooded by spectators at Son (Flying Camera, Eindhoven).

Centre Pages: Conservation before it is too late. EWACS members remove the Big Picture from Podington, Bedfordshire, former wartime home of the 92nd Bomb Group. (EWACS)

Back Cover: In order to help SOE agents remember their code, it was the practice at one stage for them to be given poems to learn. Leo Marks, who was in charge of agents' cyphers, decided that it was more efficient if these poems were original. He composed dozens of them. To him, they were purely mechanical devices, but his talents as a poet gave to all of them a value of their own. None is more poignant than the one he gave to Violette Szabo upon whose house in Brixton her name is 'carved' with pride. Poem © Leo Marks.

Acknowledgements: Extract on Operation 'Wellhit' from the Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Volume III by C. P. Stacey: *The Victory Campaign. The Operations in North-West Europe 1944-1945*, published in Ottawa in 1966. With acknowledgement to the Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, Roger Duhamel, FRSC.
AP – Associated Press; NAC – National Archives of Canada; IGN – Institut Géographique National; IWM – Imperial War Museum, London; USNA – US National Archives.

With the commencement of the breakout from the Normandy bridgehead on July 25, the problem of keeping the rapidly-moving armies properly supplied increased. The loss of the prefabricated Mulberry 'A' at Vierville in the storm the previous month meant that everything depended on Mulberry 'B' at Arromanches until a conventional port could be captured. When Cherbourg fell on June 29, the officer charged with its rehabilitation reported that 'the demolition of the port is a masterful job, beyond a doubt the most complete, intensive, and best-planned demolition in history', and it would be many months before it could handle cargo in any quantity. Dieppe and St Valéry-en-Caux were entered at the beginning of September but they were tiny by comparison with the deep-water ports of Antwerp, captured on September 4, and Le Havre, which fell on September 12. However, the latter could not be brought into operation until mid-October and, although the Antwerp docks were undamaged, they were inland and the Germans still had control of the mouth of the Scheldt. On September 5, the newly-promoted Field-Marshal Montgomery, commanding 21st Army Group (but no longer the de facto land forces commander) wrote to General Henry Crerar, commanding the Canadian First Army, which had been tasked with capturing the Channel ports, telling him that 'I need Boulogne badly', and asking how soon it could be captured. *Top:* **The port looking north-west, a picture from a Naval Intelligence Division publication which described Boulogne as 'the premier French fishing port', and 'third in order as a passenger port with trans-Atlantic as well as cross-Channel connections'.**



OPERATION 'WELLHIT': THE CAPTURE OF BOULOGNE

By Ian Galbraith

On the mouth of the River Liane lies the French coastal port of Boulogne on the English Channel, some 28 miles south-east of Folkestone. The history of the town dates back to Roman times when it first became a harbour, and it has changed hands many times through the ages, even becoming an English possession for six years after King Henry VIII took the town by siege in 1544. It was restored to France in 1550. Over the centuries, Boulogne continued to develop and, by the beginning of the First World War, it was an established seaport and holiday resort.

In August 1914, the first units of Sir John French's army disembarked and, from this moment, Boulogne became the main route for all troops entering France from England. As a result, the town became a major British base with much development centred on the old Camp de Boulogne, which had originally been built in 1801 as a base for Napoleon's army prior to the projected invasion of England. In 1804, the Colonne de la Grande Armée had been erected to commemorate the camp. This area was to see bitter fighting both in 1940 and again in 1944, the statue of Napoleon even being holed through the chest by the Royal Navy in 1940! The town was bombed in 1917 and 1918, although the nearest the German troops got to Boulogne was in 1914 when a few squadrons of cavalry came within 40 kilometres.

In 1940, the 2. Panzer-Division advanced on Boulogne by way of Samer. On May 22, an attack was made against elements of the 20th Guards Brigade. This was beaten off, and for the next three days a desperate resistance was put up, supported by the Royal Navy and French destroyers, until the ships withdrew, leaving the French commander Général Pierre Lanquetot and a handful of men to fight on alone. The town surrendered on the 25th. It was said by General Heinz Guderian that 'German tanks could not penetrate the old town walls but, by the use of a ladder from the kitchen of a nearby house and, with the help of an 88mm Flak gun, a breach was made in the wall of the cathedral.'

Over the next four years, under German occupation, the defences of the town were enhanced, some being built upon the former French coastal positions, others being specially constructed by the Organisation Todt, occasionally installing captured British weapons.

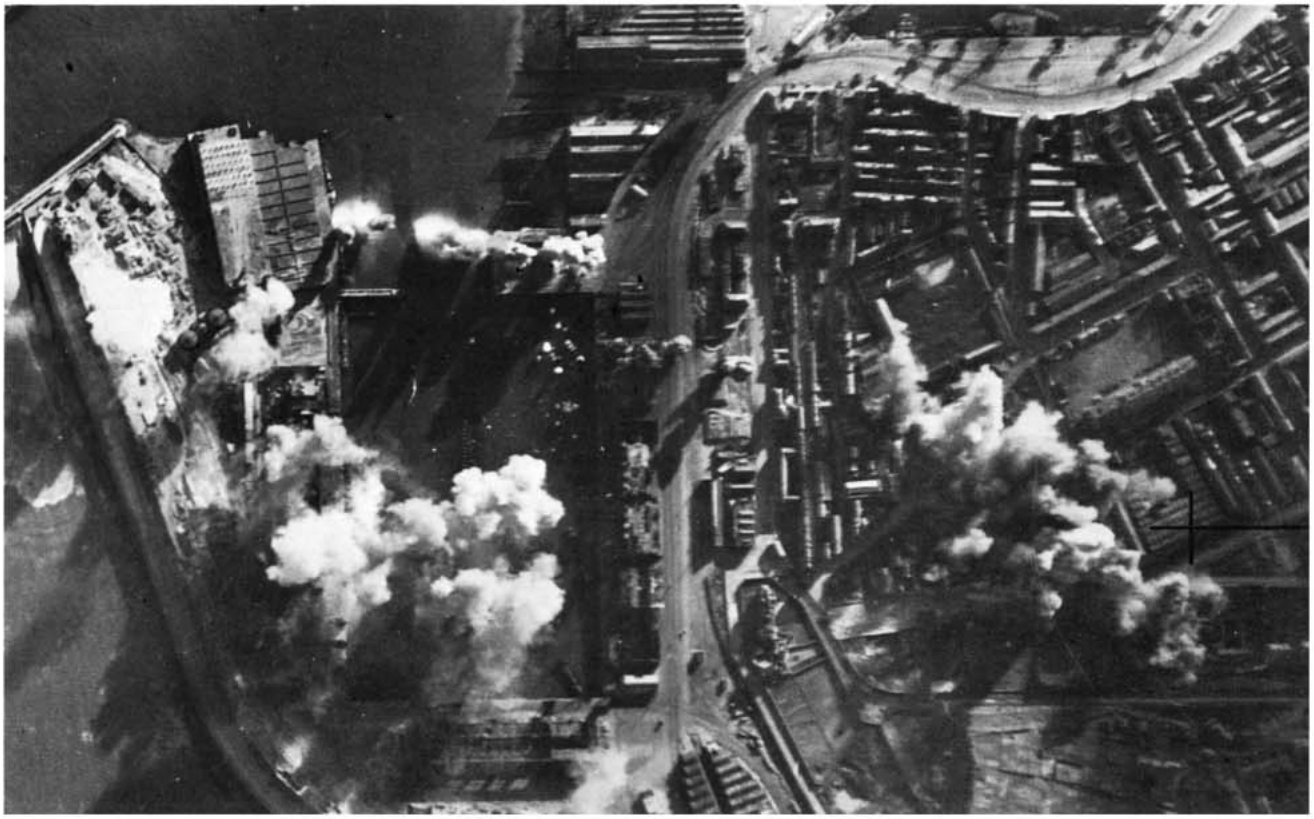
As a result of its close proximity to Britain, and its excellent harbour facilities, Boulogne was chosen to be one of the ports from which Operation 'Seelöwe', the German invasion of Britain, was to have been launched (see *After the Battle* No. 69). Many of the defences were started both to protect and support these preparations, including pens for S-Boats and the siting of cross-Channel batteries (see *After the Battle* No. 29).

Boulogne itself falls naturally into two parts: the business, commercial and residential area of the Basse-Ville surrounding the port, and the old town — the Haute-Ville — on a hill to the east containing the administrative centre, the cathedral and the walled 13th-century Citadel (sometimes referred to as the Château or Castle). This is the Rue de la Porte Neuve in May 1940, shortly before troops of the 2. Panzer-Division entered the city. In the background stands the cathedral which lies within the walls of the medieval fortifications. (ECPA)

Left: **Early arrival: Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess seen here having just landed at Boulogne-Alprech aerodrome which lay near the coast just south of the city.** *Right:* **Today, the terminal building is a sorry sight standing amidst the farmland of the reclaimed airfield. Concrete emplacements for close-support weapons still remain.**

Ancient French fortifications found a new lease of life under their new owners. *Left:* **This is an inspection by Vize-Admiral Theodor Krancke, former captain of the 'pocket battleship'** ***Admiral Scheer,*** **later commander of Marine-Gruppenkommando West. At the fort on Mont de Coupes at Le Portel, the German Navy mounted three 13.8cm French guns.**

Above: **An air raid on the dock installations in 1942. Bombs can be seen exploding on the Quai Gambetta bordering the Port de Marée, and beside the Hôtel de la Poste just behind the Arrière Port. We are looking east with, in the left background, the wooded enclave marking the walls of the Citadel with the cathedral prominent at the northern end. (IWM)**



One of the reasons for the regular attacks on Boulogne was the presence of what the Allies referred to as E-Boat pens ('E' standing for Enemy) which had been built at the seaward end of the Appontement Nord. In actual fact, they were covered shelters for Schnellboots — 35-metre torpedo boats having a top speed of 35 knots with a range of 700 miles — so should really be referred to as S-Boat pens. Their activities in 'Der Kanal' were controlled by Kapitän zur See Rudolf Petersen from his HQ at Wimereux just south of Boulogne. The S-Boats achieved one of their major victories in April 1944 when they sank two American tank landing ships off the Devon coast (see *After the Battle* No. 44). *Above:* This particular bombing took place the previous September, the same month when five B-17s of the Eighth Air Force joined 61 Wellingtons, 56 Stirlings and 10 Halifaxes of RAF Bomber Command in the first night raid of the war in which the Americans participated. The targets were two of the gun batteries at Boulogne but, in the event, the attack was a failure, both the target marking by 'Oboe' and 'Baillie Beam' Mosquitos and the bombing being inaccurate. (IWM)

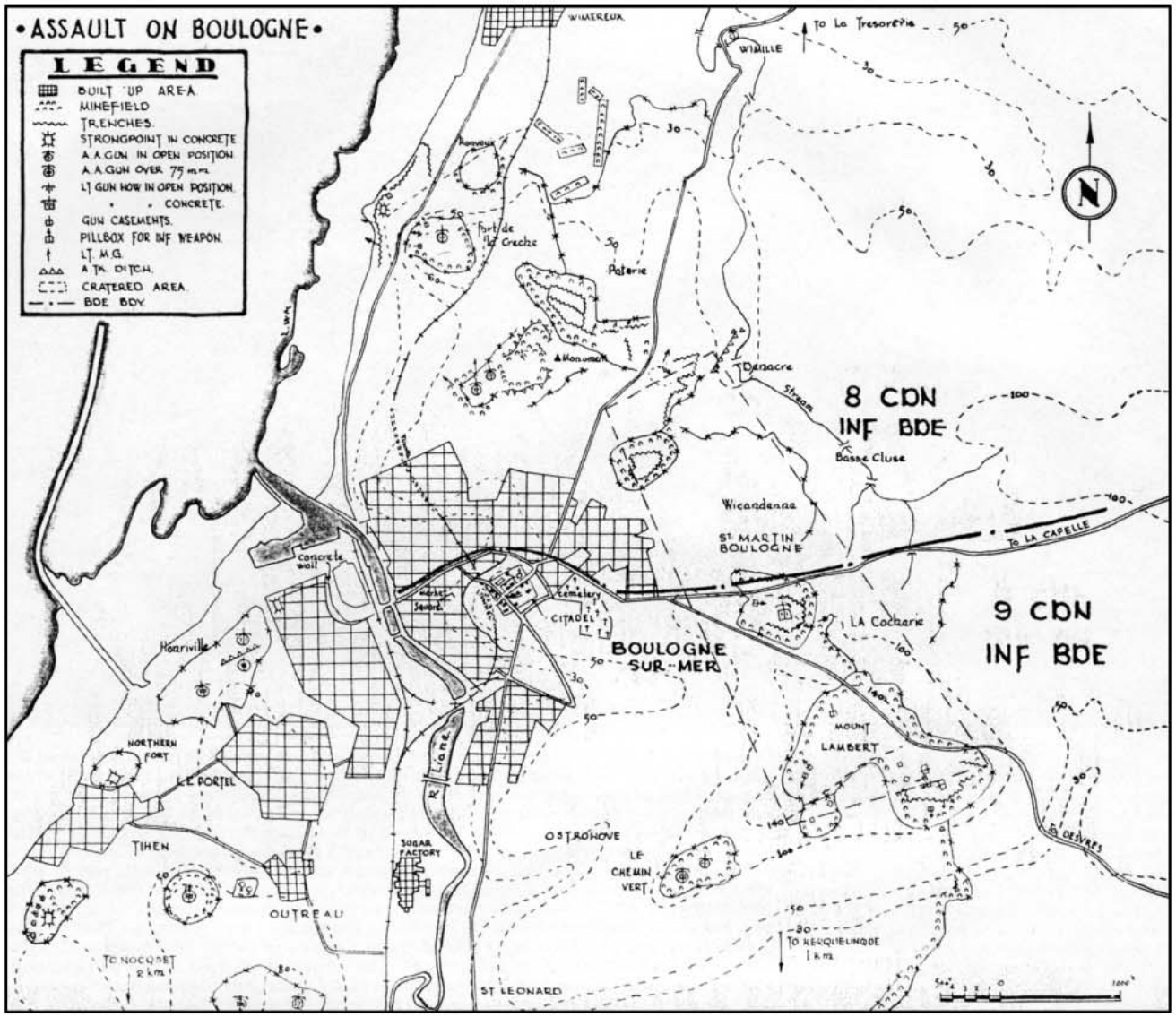
Throughout the next four years, Boulogne suffered a large number of air attacks from the Royal Air Force, and occasional bombardment from the British batteries in Kent.

Following the Allied invasion of France in June 1944, the Canadian 3rd Division was tasked with the job of capturing the Channel ports in the Pas-de-Calais, the Canadian II Corps, part of General 'Harry' Crerar's Canadian First Army, having the overall responsibility for clearing the coastal belt with its V-Weapon sites and the cross-Channel batteries. This course of action stemmed from pressure in Britain where those living across the Channel had endured four years of shelling and, more latterly, attacks from V-Weapons. Now, they felt that if there was an opportunity to stop these attacks, then it should be taken.

While Canadian forces were fighting their way up the coast towards the Pas-de-Calais, the defences of Boulogne were further strengthened as a result of the Hitler Directive of September 4 stating that Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk and the Calais area were to become 'Festungen' (Fortresses) and that they were to be defended to the last.

After General Crerar saw Montgomery on September 9, he issued orders 'to proceed without delay to capture Boulogne, Dunkirk and Calais', quite a tall order for an army which comprised two armoured and four infantry divisions, one of which could not be used for lack of transport, and which also had the task of driving German forces from the Scheldt and Walcheren (see *After the Battle* No. 36). Montgomery then said that Dunkirk need not be captured, just 'masked' (contained by the 4th Special Service Brigade after its release from Le Havre).

However, as it would be several days before artillery and AVRE assault vehicles from the British 79th Armoured Division could be brought up the 200 kilometres from Le Havre, it was the middle of the month before the attack on Boulogne could be mounted, *Above:* These refugees were some of the 8,000 who left the city under German orders between September 11 and 13. They were pictured by Canadian war photographer Donald Grant at La Capelle (on the N42 five kilometres east of the city), a spot which has hardly changed. (NAC)



Boulogne had been given 'Fortress' status in Hitler's first list of January 19, 1944, along with the other major ports of the Continental coast, including the U-Boat bases (see *After the Battle* No. 55). Its commander was Generalleutnant Ferdinand Heim *(below)* who had been appointed to the position on August 5 after spending several months on the retired list following his selection by Hitler as a scapegoat for the Soviet breakthrough on the Don River which led to the disastrous defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943. He arrived in 'Festung Boulogne' late in August to find that little had been done to prepare the fortress against a land attack. He had been instructed to build a defence zone some 15 kilometres thick, a task which would have taken several weeks and employed hundreds of troops. Heim had neither, so, as he later explained, 'I merely put a big red circle on the map to show that the demolitions had theoretically been carried out.' (AP)

Colonel C. P. Stacey, the official Canadian historian, describes the defences and the battle which led to the capture of the town:

Boulogne was ringed on the landward side by a series of high hills which dominated all approaches. Mont Lambert on the east, in particular, rose 550 feet; and farther south the Herquelingue 'feature' was almost as high. These and other positions had been heavily fortified by a resourceful enemy, for Boulogne had been on Hitler's original list of 'fortresses'. The garrison was under an able and experienced senior officer, Generalleutnant Ferdinand Heim, who had served in Poland as Chief-of-Staff to General Guderian and had risen to command a corps in Russia. Its strength (estimated by Allied intelligence as between 5,500 and 7,000) was actually about 10,000. Its quality was not especially high, the 2,000 infantry consisting of a fortress machine gun battalion and two fortress infantry battalions, all made up of low-category men. A good part of the artillery and engineer personnel of the 64. Infanterie-Division were present. As at Le Havre, the Germans were strong in artillery, the guns including coast defence pieces up to 305mm (12-inch), of which, however, many could not fire landward, and at least 22 88mm guns, plus about nine 150mm howitzers belonging to the 64. Division. Apart from the dual-purpose 88s, there were few anti-tank guns.

Major-General Daniel Spry's Canadian 3rd Infantry Division had come up against the defences of Boulogne on September 5, and that night issued a preliminary order concerning its capture. But the town was far too strong to be taken without a deliberate attack and heavy support; and this meant delay. It is recorded that Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds of the Canadian II Corps considered 'bombers, Priests [armoured personnel carriers more commonly known as 'Kangaroos'] and medium artillery as vital to plan'; 'other gadgets' were desirable but not so much so as to necessitate postponing the attack to wait for them. But RAF Bomber Command, the armoured carriers and a great force of artillery were all committed to the attack on Le Havre; and Boulogne could not be attacked until Le Havre fell and these resources were freed. From one fortress to the other was roughly 135 miles by road.

The attack on Boulogne, Operation 'Wellhit', was to be executed in four phases. General Spry intended to launch his main assault from the east against the general area of Mont Lambert, using the 8th and 9th Infantry Brigade Groups, after a heavy preliminary bombardment by aircraft and artillery. In the second phase, the two brigades would secure the centre of the built-up area and, it was hoped, seize a crossing over the Liane river before the bridges could be blown. The third phase would see the capture of outlying strong points at Fort de la Crèche, Outreau and Herquelingue; the fourth, the capture of Nocquet on the coast and the heights of St Etienne.

For Boulogne, the Canadian 3rd Division was assigned support from specialised armour provided by the 79th Armoured Division: two squadrons of the 1st Lothian and Border Yeomanry with mine-clearing Flail tanks; the 141st RAC (minus one squadron) with flame-throwing Crocodile tanks; and two Royal Engineers assault squadrons with Churchill AVRE (Assault Vehicle Royal Engineers) tanks. The special armour was assembled under the wings of the 31st Tank Brigade commanded by Brigadier G. S. Knight.

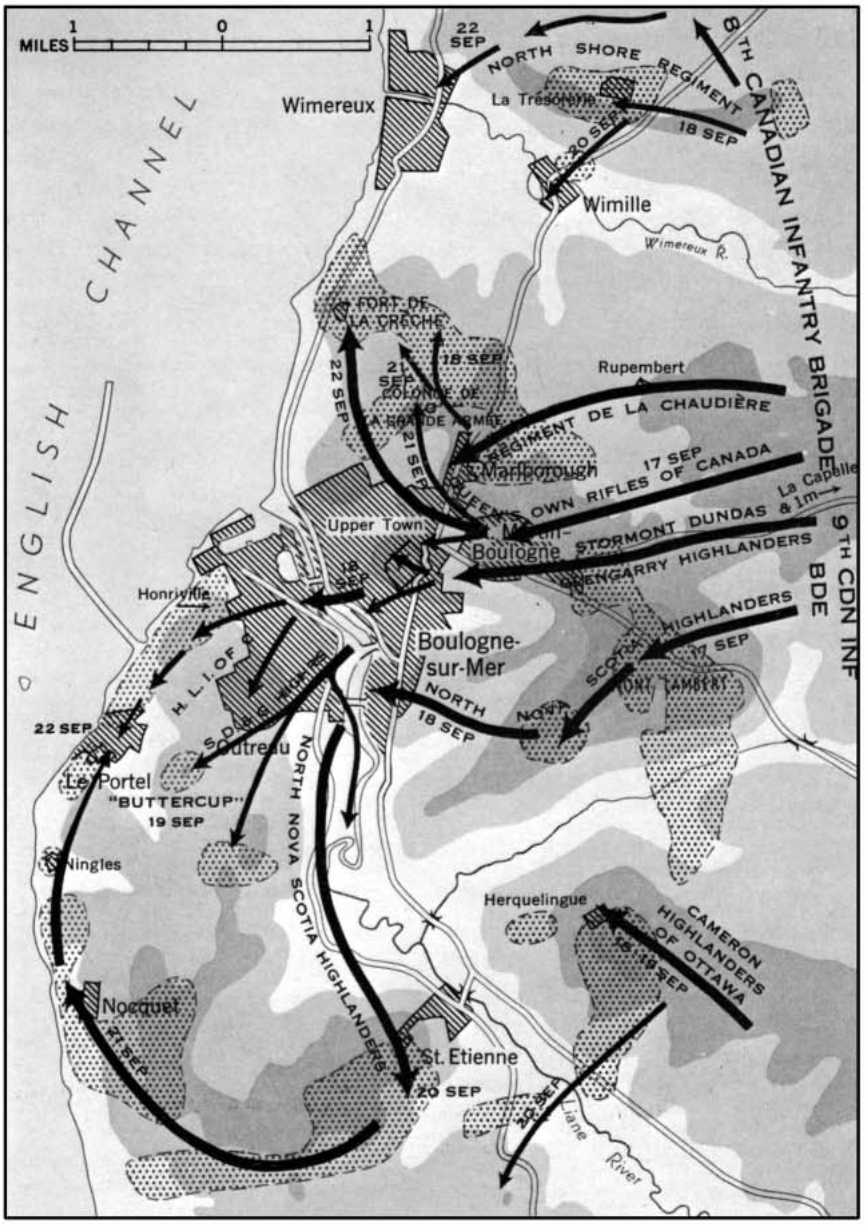
The preparations for aerial bombardment reflected the views of the Army Commander, General Crerar, who on September 13 wrote to Field-Marshal Montgomery:

'While the rapid fall of Le Havre has favourable potential influences, it is most important that the effect so gained should not be more than lost by an unsuccessful attack on the next objective, Boulogne. I, therefore, want Simonds to button things up properly, taking a little more time, if necessary, in order to ensure a decisive assault.'

The bomber support was in fact the last part of the programme to be settled. A hoped-for meeting with a representative of RAF Bomber Command did not materialise on September 14; HQ Canadian First Army complained: 'Whole affair now held up awaiting his arrival'. But, on the 15th, General Simonds, his own Chief-of-Staff and Crerar's, and the Senior Air Staff Officer of No. 84 Group, flew to Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Air Force at Versailles and duly 'buttoned up' the question of air support at both Boulogne and Calais. The first discussions were not particularly satisfactory, it is true; two air vice-marshals, one of whom was from Bomber Command, were reluctant 'to use more than 300-400 RAF [heavy] bombers for each port', counting on supplementing this effort with mediums. But when Air Chief Marshals Tedder, Harris and Leigh-Mallory (Deputy Supreme Commander, AOC-in-C Bomber Command, and the AOC Allied Expeditionary Force respectively) arrived 'for another meeting', the Corps Commander seized the opportunity and put his case to them. All three 'agreed with little hesitation that if Boulogne and Calais were to be captured forthwith and air support was necessary, then it should be given in full measure'. The details were worked out at once. Next day, General Spry announced that the 'Wellhit' D-Day would be September 17. Thus the assault on Boulogne went in on the same day as 'Market Garden', the much greater airborne operation at Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Arnhem in Holland.

During the final stage of preparation, particularly after the fall of Le Havre, the tactical air forces were directed against Boulogne. All told, there were 49 attacks, before the assault, by mediums, fighter-bombers and rocket-firing Typhoons. Their main targets were battery positions; these were also engaged by the gradually growing force of artillery deployed around Boulogne, but ammunition shortages prevented heavy counter-battery fire before the actual day of the assault. Ultimately, 328 guns were used against the fortress: those of five field, seven medium, three heavy and two heavy anti-aircraft regiments. The British 9th Army Group Royal Artillery and the divisional artillery of the 51st (Highland) Division, both of which had hurried up from Le Havre, joined with the Canadian gunners in this operation. Since this great force of artillery was supporting the Canadian 3rd Division, the responsibility for co-ordinating and directing the effort rested mainly upon the 3rd Division's artillery commander, Brigadier P. A. S. Todd.

There was potent artillery help also from across the Channel. The Brigadier Royal Artillery, Canadian First Army (Brigadier H. O. N. Brownfield) flew to England and arranged for the mammoth guns on the South Foreland, east of Dover, to fire on the German cross-Channel batteries in the Calais–Cap Gris-Nez area, to prevent them from interfering with the attack on Boulogne. Two 14-inch guns ('Winnie' and 'Pooh') manned by the Royal Marine Siege Regiment, and two 15-inch manned by the 540th Coast Regiment, RA, came into action, firing with air observation; and after some preliminary shooting on the 16th, they fired actively and accurately on the 17th. The German battery positions were hit repeatedly; and one of the 15-inch guns scored a direct hit on one of the casemates at the Noires Mottes battery near Sangatte (Batterie Lindemann, mounting three 406mm guns), the range being about 42,000 yards, or over 23 miles. The 15-inch guns fired this day until their old barrels were so worn that they could no longer reach the French coast. The 14-inch were in action again on September 19 and 20.



The despair with which the garrison viewed the coming battle is reflected in the writings of one officer: '*September 7:* Encircled in Boulogne. For days I knew that there was no getting out for us. *September 9:* Yesterday, late in the afternoon, enemy bombers attacked the forward positions. Sometimes one can despair of everything if one is at the mercy of the RAF without any protection. *September 11:* All day long artillery fire in our outlying strong points and, in between, attacks by fighter-bombers. The morale of the troops is bad, and no wonder. They are mostly old married men and the situation is quite hopeless . . . *September 13:* Alcohol is the only thing which can comfort anyone in our position . . . This afternoon more heavy air attacks on the outer defences of Boulogne. *September 14:* At the harbour command everyone is desperately gay and tries to drown all worries in alcohol.'

At 8.25 a.m. on September 17, the first aircraft from Bomber Command appeared over Boulogne. An officer who was watching from high ground south of the city described the scene:

'The bombers approached us head on; suddenly, huge bursts of dust and smoke plumed out on the slopes of Mount Lambert . . . Over the peak of Mount Lambert appeared a tight concentration of low [artillery] air bursts, designed to keep the flak crews there below ground . . . A later wave of bombers, directed on the peak of the mount was preceded by a Pathfinder which dropped a white smoke marker. The artillery seemed also to lay smoke here. A swarm of planes then materialised out of the sky as before, and once again huge clouds of smoke blotted out the shape of the hill-top.'

In this single attack, Bomber Command dropped 3,232 tons of bombs on Boulogne. A total of 540 Lancasters, 212 Halifaxes and 40 Mosquitoes took part; in spite of the artillery fire directed on the flak positions, two aircraft were lost. An RAF group captain was with Brigadier John Rockingham (CO of the 9th Infantry Brigade) in his tactical headquarters dug in on his brigade's start-line. He was in radio communication with the master bomber overhead, and was able to pass to him the brigadier's confirmation that the markers put down by the pathfinder aircraft were on precisely the right points. This was 'close co-operation' at its best.

As at Le Havre, the precise results of this bombardment are a matter of discussion. Generalleutnant Heim claimed that 'amongst personnel, casualties were almost negligible' and that there was little effect on permanent installations; and, after the battle, British operational researchers found that only a relatively small proportion of the enemy's guns had actually been destroyed or damaged. The extensive cratering impeded armoured vehicles supporting the ground attack. There is, however, ample evidence that the bombing seriously disrupted the defenders' communications and shook their morale. (A German who had been in an underground bunker during the attacks remarked that it was 'like being in the bottom of a cocktail-shaker.') The investigators noted that positions within the limits of

'September 17: **It is nine months today since I last went on leave. What a good time I had. And today what a contrast. I was just ready to go to breakfast when we had to run for shelter and we have been there ever since. The bombardment by bombers and artillery was terrific. It is four o'clock in the afternoon now. I am looking at your pictures, my loved ones. I am quiet now and resigned to my fate whatever it may be. Farewell, my dear ones, I pray to God that He may protect and guide you . . . All afternoon a heavy artillery barrage fell on our positions. We could not move. Then we heard tanks approaching and had to surrender. It is a wonder that we are still alive . . . '**

Mont Lambert dominated the high ground to the east of the city. Subjected to a heavy bombardment from both bomb and shell, while the lighter constructions were destroyed, the reinforced concrete bunkers and blockhouses survived relatively intact. The hill is now dominated by a massive broadcasting aerial. (IWM)

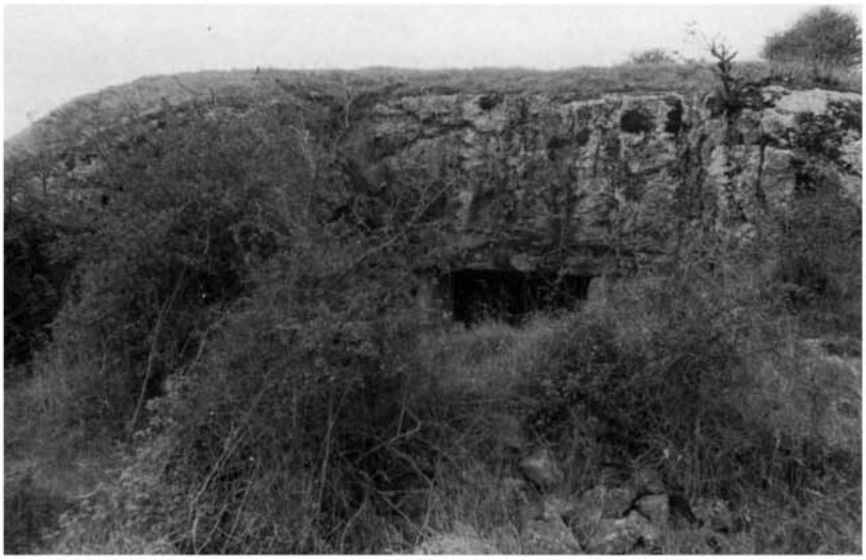
The 9th Brigade advanced to La Cocherie supported by two AVREs, while another troop from the 87th Assault Squadron attacked Mont Lambert. It proved a very difficult nut to crack as Generalleutnant Heim realised that if the dominant feature was captured by the Canadians, it would effectively remove his ability to defend the port. Although the blockhouses had been battered, they were still basically intact. This one has also survived the passage of another 50 years.

the heavy bomber targets were captured much more rapidly than those outside. Moreover, the bombing certainly gave, as always, a fillip to the spirits of our own infantry which was no small factor in their success. Headquarters First Army, commenting on the researchers' report some months later, remarked: 'Despite the proved lack of material effect of ground or air bombardment on the defences, it is considered that both the RAF and the artillery bombardment were extremely effective in neutralising the enemy defences.'

The 8th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier K. G. Blackader) attacked on the right, the 9th (Brigadier Rockingham) on the left. H-Hour was 9.55 a.m. — the moment when the last bomb fell on Target 1. However, it was considered important if possible to capture the extreme northern end of the German defended area before the main attack went in; for the strong points about La Trésorerie and Wimille appeared to be a menace to it. A coastal battery on the hill at La Trésorerie [Batterie Friedrich-August] mounted three 305mm (12-inch) guns and, though these could not fire landward, there were other weapons here and the position was commanding. Accordingly, the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment was to attack it at 9.25 a.m. after half an hour's artillery preparation. The evident assumption that 30 minutes would suffice to clear the area turned out to be too optimistic. After making slight progress, the attack was checked in minefields covered by airburst fire from light artillery. The North Shore in fact did not clear all its objectives until September 19. Nevertheless, it seems to have kept the Germans busy enough to prevent them from interfering with the main attack.

The task of the 8th Brigade's main body was to deal with the enemy's defences between Mont Lambert and La Trésorerie, in the vicinity of Marlborough and St Martin-Boulogne. Immediately after the bombing, Le Régiment de la Chaudière advanced against Marlborough. En route they occupied an intact radar station in the hamlet of Rupembert; and by nightfall they were consolidating in Marlborough. On the brigade's left (southern) flank, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada were directed against St Martin–Boulogne. By 11.00 a.m., they had captured the railway station there, and by evening they were close to the 'citadel' of Boulogne. Throughout the brigade area, shell-fire and minefields were the main hindrances to advance.

Above: **This bunker on the south-east side of the hill covered the road from Baincthun. In this case, the frontal damage to the aperture could well have been caused by one of the petard-armed AVREs. (IWM)** *Below:* **Post-war demolition has further removed part of the canopy and the steel shield.**



Above: **Eddie Worth, wartime photographer with Associated Press, visited Mont Lambert on September 22 when he pictured Private R. Hallahan of Montreal with Corporal T. E. Warren of Winnipeg outside a troop shelter.** *Below:* **Our photographer, Ian Galbraith, found the same bunker, its entrance now choked with foliage.**

While these operations were proceeding on the northern flank, the 9th Brigade assaulted the Mont Lambert feature, moving forward the moment the Bomber Command attack had ceased. Tanks of the 10th Armoured Regiment (the Fort Garry Horse) led; the infantry rode into battle in Kangaroos and half-tracks which were followed by AVREs of the 87th Assault Squadron, RE. Flails had also been provided to clear paths through minefields; but when the attack went in, the enemy's artillery prevented this relatively vulnerable equipment from coming into action.

On the right, along the main road from La Capelle, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders led the assault in 'galloping Kangaroos under a tremendous barrage of artillery'. (The artillery actually fired timed programmes, prolonging the neutralising effect of the bombing and enabling the infantry to reach their first objectives with diminished opposition.) When minefields stopped the Kangaroos, the Glengarrians continued on foot; they took only 45 minutes to capture their first objectives. By this time, however, the German batteries had recovered sufficiently to bring down hot fire from their commanding positions on the slopes of Mont Lambert and nearby hills. Although the shelling made movement almost impossible, men of the 18th Field Company, RCE, performed an outstanding feat by clearing a vital route through the mines by hand.

Left: **Gun positions on the summit. (IWM)** *Right:* **The security fence surrounding the broadcasting station can be seen on the left.**

Meanwhile, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders ran into heavy opposition when they attacked the main fortifications of the Mont Lambert feature. Both sides had appreciated the importance of this dominating ground; Generalleutnant Heim believed that penetration in that sector 'would make defence of the port impossible'. He claimed, however, that his defensive preparations here had not been completed when 'Wellhit' began. The North Nova Scotias were transported in Kangaroos as far as the minefields; thereafter, their upward progress was delayed by machine gun fire from pillboxes which had survived the bombing. These were overcome with the help of AVREs and the hard ascent continued. 'Towards night, Crocodiles and Flails were able to come up and the area was steadily cleared.' By the day's end, a great part of Mont Lambert was in Canadian hands.

Arrangements had been made for three armoured assault teams of the British 31st Tank Brigade (each composed of one troop of Flails, two troops of Crocodiles and one half troop of AVREs, together with one platoon of Canadian infantry) to drive into Boulogne at the end of the first phase, and seize the important bridges over the Liane river in the heart of the city. The Glengarrians provided the infantry component for two of the assault teams and these reached the Liane early on the 18th only to find the bridges blown. The third team, operating with the North Nova Scotias, had a similar experience.

Thus, at the end of the first day, a considerable wedge had been driven into the enemy's fortifications in the Highland Brigade's sector, while in the 8th's good progress had been made. At the extreme north of the position, the North Shore Regiment had a foothold in the La Trésorerie strong point. All along the line, however, the operation had gone more slowly than the forecast. A paper produced at the HQ of First Army on September 15 seems to have assumed that Boulogne would fall in one day and Calais could be attacked on the 19th.

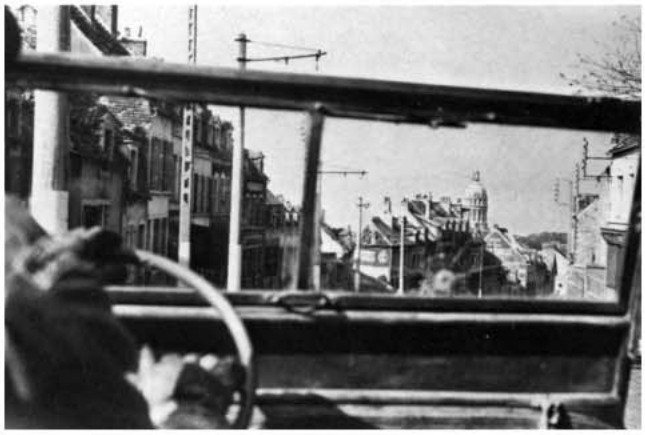
The 18th, however, saw further solid progress. In the 8th Brigade sector, the North Shore completed the capture of the gun positions at La Trésorerie; the Chaudière pushed on to the vicinity of the Colonne de la Grande Armée where there was hard fighting. The Queen's Own advanced through the northern outskirts of the city. In the 9th Brigade area, the North Nova Scotias completed the capture of Mont Lambert. The Glengarrians, accompanied by AVREs, reached the so-called citadel in the centre of Boulogne. This was actually the 'upper town', perched on a limestone hill overlooking the port and surrounded by high walls. It soon succumbed to a combination of modern methods of assault and story-book stratagem. A civilian showed Major J. G. Stothart, one of the company commanders, a 'secret tunnel' leading to the interior and Stothart soon had a platoon in the passage.

'At the same time, the Churchills wheeled up, raking the ramparts with Besa [machine gun] fire, and prepared to place petards against the portcullis. The gate was effectively blown in. At once, a host of white flags waved from the walls. To add to the confusion, Major Stothart had by now appeared in the midst of the besieged fort, utterly astonishing its "defenders".'

About 200 prisoners were taken, including 16 officers. The Highland Light Infantry of Canada, coming up from reserve, scrambled across the Liane in the evening by using the remains of a half-demolished bridge in the middle of the city; the 18th Field Company then set to work to improvise repairs to the bridge with timber, and had it open for light vehicles by 4.30 a.m. on the 19th.

The N42 — the main axis route from the east which formed the boundary between the 8th and 9th Brigades — on September 16. Here, Donald Grant pictured two aspects of the operation at that stage. *Top:* **A Churchill SBG bridge-layer of 81st Assault Squadron, RE, which appears to be called 'Flint II', and** *above* **prisoners being brought in from Mont Lambert. (NAC). Three armoured assault columns, under the 9th Brigade, but comprising mainly 79th Armoured Division components, were to press forward into the city to seize bridges over the River Liane, and they set off in the late afternoon of the 17th.**

Although the road has been widened at this point, the château remains almost unchanged. From here, Boulogne 'Centre Ville' is six kilometres down the road.



Bomb craters and rubble hindered the advance but, by nightfall, eight tanks from Column 'A' had succeeded in reaching the Citadel. At 6.30 a.m. the next morning (18th), the attack began, one Sherman destroying machine gun positions on the walls.

Left: **With a bullet hole in his windscreen, Donald Grant follows the route through the eastern outskirts towards the Citadel the following day.** *Right:* **This is still the N42 although at this point it is called the Rue de St Omer. (NAC)**

The capture of the upper town and the crossing of the Liane marked the end of the second phase. While the 8th Brigade continued its operations to subdue the German defences north of the port, the 9th turned south to deal with equally stubborn strong points in the Outreau peninsula. On September 19, the HLI pressed forward here from its Liane bridgehead. The opposition was very heavy: 'Murderous fire came from all directions which was heavier than the battalion has yet experienced'. It had 64 casualties and four supporting Flails were knocked out. The Glengarrians took up the struggle in the afternoon with the help of tanks, AVREs and Wasps (flame-throwing carriers). They seized the village of Outreau, after extricating themselves from a minefield, and captured many prisoners, 'including perhaps 30 black Senegalese complete with fez'.

Between Outreau and the open Channel was a hill, about 250 feet high, capped with a German battery of six 88mm and four 20mm guns. The Glengarrians assaulted this formidable position, known in the plan as 'Buttercup', on the 19th, aided by heavy artillery concentrations. 'The infantry, following the fire closely, swarmed over the hill with bayonets and grenades before the last rounds had fallen.' 'Buttercup' contributed another 185 prisoners to the already bulging cages in the rear areas.

Reaching the Rue de la Porte Neuve (see page 1), Don Grant is just in time to picture captured troops being marched away to the east. Over 200 prisoners had been taken in the Citadel which fell after two AVREs fired petard charges at the main gate to demolish the barricade protecting it. At the same time, Canadian infantry appeared within the walls, having been shown a secret entrance by a Frenchman. (NAC)

Rue de la Porte Neuve at the junction with Rue de St Omer and Rue de Calais, which has now been re-named Avenue de Général de Gaulle.

Above: **The 9th Brigade soon established its headquarters in the old Citadel — a building which had seen more than its fair share of history. Dating from the 13th century, it had been here during the First World War that a Canadian NCO had assisted in carrying the coffin bearing the remains of Britain's Unknown Warrior. After the selection by Brigadier-General L. J. Wyatt, GOC British troops in France and Flanders, at midnight on December 7, 1920, the following day the chosen body was moved from St Pol the 60-odd kilometres to Boulogne. There it rested overnight in the Chapelle Ardente in the Citadel, until the morning of November 10 when it was carried from the chapel** *(right)* **for the next stage in its journey to Whitehall in London (see *After the Battle* No. 6).** *Below left:* **Signalman F. R. J. Savage of the 9th Brigade, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, looks at the damaged plaque which recorded the event. (NAC)** *Below right:* **Our author, Ian Galbraith, examines the new tablet which now replaces the old.**

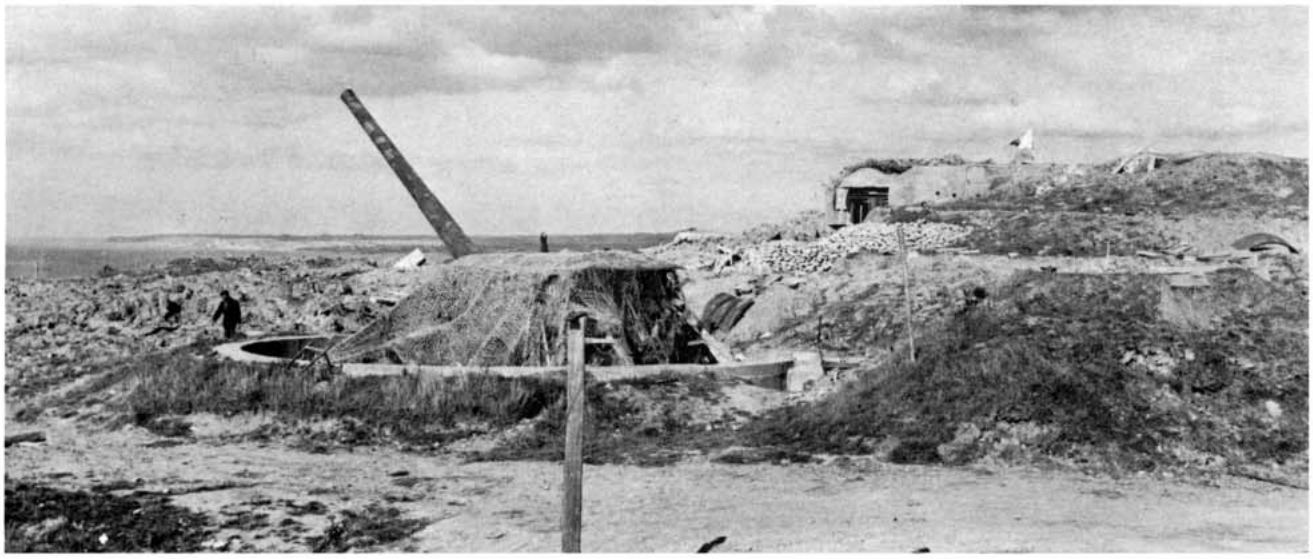
On the 20th, Eddie Worth pictured scenes inside the city as Canadian forces pressed on towards the port area. 'The Battle of Boulogne has entered the final phase', ran the 1944 caption. 'Canadians, creeping from doorway to doorway, are slowly but surely edging towards the remnants of the German garrison making their last stand. The town has taken terrific punishment from air and artillery. Machine-gunning and shelling continue to be fierce.' *Above:* This is the Grand Rue which leads from the Citadel to the port, although it is now one-way, up the hill.

Left: **Midway along the road to the harbour, the street widens out into the Place Dalton in front of St Nicholas Church. It then continues** *(right)* **along the narrower Rue de la Lampe. Canadian forces reached the port on September 20 and the following day the dock area was cleared together with most of the northern part of the city.**

Ian was fortunate in being able to gain vantage points virtually the same as those used by Eddie Worth in 1944.

Above: **'The bargain basement.' On the morning of September 21, the German officer commanding the garrison at Herquélingue (south-east of the city) surrendered, about 500 men in all. They were to come out over a set route between midday and 1 p.m. along the N1. Don Grant pictured the column as it negotiated rubble from a bridge which, the caption says, was blown to obstruct Allied vehicles. (NAC)** *Below:* **The bridge support on one side still survives.**

The North Nova Scotia Highlanders completed the next phase in the Outreau peninsula with the assistance of the divisional machine gun battalion, the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa. After containing the enemy on the southern flank during the initial operations, the Camerons had successfully assaulted the German position on top of the very high hill at Herquélingue on the night of September 18/19. However, when the North Nova Scotias advanced on the 20th, they came under fire from the lower slopes of the feature. About 400 German soldiers had remained hidden in the underground passages of Herquélingue while the Camerons occupied the casemates on the summit. Some tank fire from the Fort Garry Horse quelled the opposition and, next day, this large force came marching out to surrender (General Spry christened this 'the bargain basement incident'). The North Nova Scotias had continued their advance to capture the village of St Etienne, and subsequently turned north along the coast to deal with the remaining defences at Nocquet, Ningles and Le Portel.



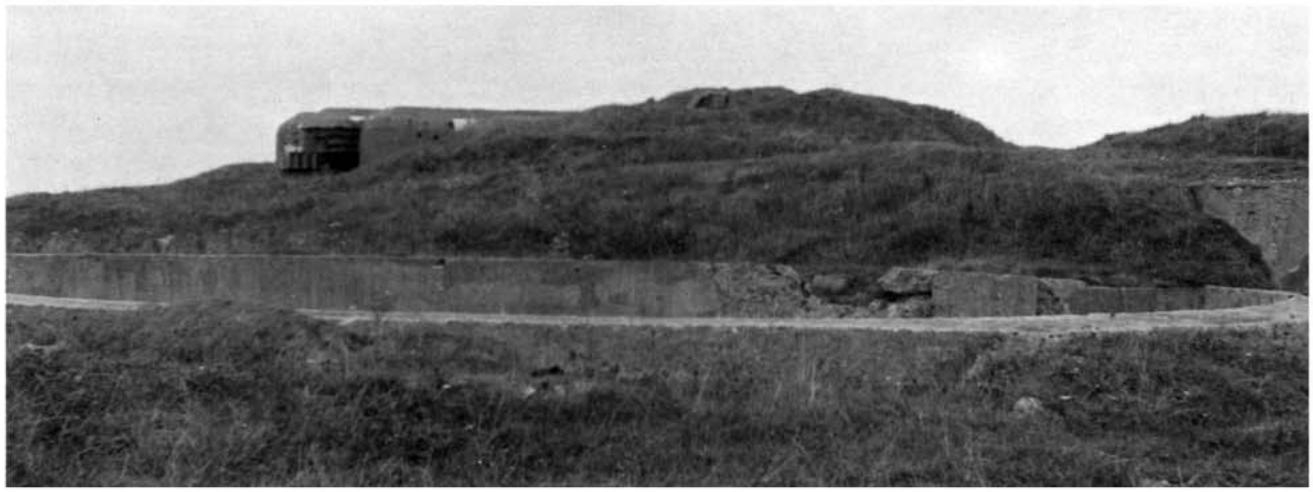
Fort de la Crèche was captured early on September 22 after a massive artillery and air bombardment had failed to dislodge the garrison. It was a formidable position with both large-calibre naval guns and close-support weapons. (IWM)

While the 9th Brigade was completing its tasks in the Outreau peninsula, the 8th was reducing the last German defences on the northern outskirts of Boulogne. In this area, the focal points of resistance were Wimille, Fort de la Crèche and Wimereux. On September 19, the North Shore moved against Wimille; they met stubborn resistance but captured the village, together with many prisoners, the following morning. From this time, the momentum of the attack slowed as some of Generalleutnant Heim's best troops fought tenaciously for their last strong points.

Since Fort de la Crèche was strongly held, the 8th Brigade screened it with smoke and attacked the town of Wimereux on the 21st. Lieutenant-Colonel J. E. Anderson of the North Shore was reluctant to employ heavy bombardment against a target which he knew contained many civilians. Accordingly, only one field regiment and some captured light German guns engaged the defences while the infantry gradually penetrated the eastern portion of the town. Effective close support was given by a battery of the 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, RCA, which silenced machine guns in the railway station. Fortunately, the town's main defences faced seawards and the North Shore were able to complete the capture of Wimereux on the 22nd, receiving a warm welcome from the population.

By this time the formidable Fort de la Crèche had also fallen. This 'northern anchor of the main fortifications' was an old French work which the Germans had modernised and greatly strengthened. When 'Wellhit' began, its armament included six naval guns (two 210mm and four 105mm) as well as lighter field and Flak pieces. The defenders' morale was noticeably higher than that of the remainder of the garrison. On September 21, patrols of the Queen's Own Rifles and the Chaudière probed the outer works and obtained valuable information in spite of strong reaction. On the afternoon of the same day, some 78 medium bombers of No. 2 Group, RAF, attacked the fort. These preliminaries proved their worth when the Queen's Own advanced on the following morning. With the assistance of a captured German gun they quickly subdued the now disheartened garrison; Fort de la Crèche surrendered at 7.50 a.m. It was reported that some 500 prisoners were taken in this strong hold.

Based on an old French fortification, it can be seen beside the N40 to Wimereux north of Boulogne.



Left: **Brigadier John Rockingham is pictured accepting the surrender of Generalleutnant Heim at the southern of the two forts at Le Portel** *(right)* **to where the German garrison commander had moved his command post after the position at Mont Lambert had fallen. The number of Germans killed during the defence of Boulogne is not known, but Generalleutnant Heim said casualties were astonishingly light. Although the garrison troops had given an oath to defend the fortress 'to the end of my life and that of the last man under me', after the war Heim said that 'I felt I could lay down my charge with a clear conscience when I decided the situation was hopeless from a military standpoint. It is difficult for us Western people to sacrifice our lives when the situation is hopeless', he explained, 'and that is the main reason for my troops surrendering rather than dying in their bunkers. The further east you go the less important death becomes. The Japanese have no fear of death at all, and the Russians have almost none. In England and America life is very precious, and everything is done in wartime to preserve it and prevent its needless waste. We Germans stand in the middle.' (AP & IWM)**

Operation 'Wellhit' ended on the afternoon of September 22 in the Outreau peninsula. Scout cars with loudspeakers impressed the futility of further resistance on the garrison at Le Portel. There were two strong points here. The northern one fell first; then, just as the 9th Brigade and a squadron of the 10th Armoured Regiment were about to assault the southerly position, the enemy hoisted the white flag. Generalleutnant Heim surrendered to Brigadier Rockingham at 4.30 p.m. and the last fighting ceased after the German commander sent a cease-fire order to a detachment isolated on the harbour mole, which had fought a single 88mm gun to the bitter end.

The front of the fort at Le Portel still shows signs of the heavy bombardment. In the far distance lies Cap Griz-Nez, the next objective in the Canadian drive up the coast.

On October 14, the victory was celebrated in what is now the Place de la Resistance — a square little changed in 50 years. (IWM)

Six days had been consumed in the operations against Boulogne at a juncture when time was very important. Apart from this, the results were gratifying. The Canadians took 9,517 prisoners, including 250 wounded; their own losses were calculated as 634 killed, wounded and missing. Those of the six infantry battalions that bore the brunt amounted to 462, the 9th Brigade's (247) being very slightly higher than the 8th's (215). The heaviest loss fell upon the Highland Light Infantry of Canada (97 casualties, 18 of them fatal) and the North Nova Scotia Highlanders (96 casualties, 27 fatal) . The enemy force had been only a little smaller than that at Le Havre, and the two Canadian brigades engaged against it had lost more men than the two British divisions that took the larger city. In view of the strength of the ground and the defences, it was fortunate, as an observer said, that the enemy's will to fight was not stronger. The German defenders frequently went on firing until the Canadian infantry were close to their positions, and then gave themselves up, in many cases having their kit packed ready to surrender.

Above: **The Jardin des Tintelleries became a temporary holding area for many of the 9,500-odd prisoners who had surrendered.** *Below:* **Located just north-west of the Citadel, off the Rue Dutertre, the garden has now adopted an air of utilitarianism following the loss of the ornamental bandstands. (IWM)**

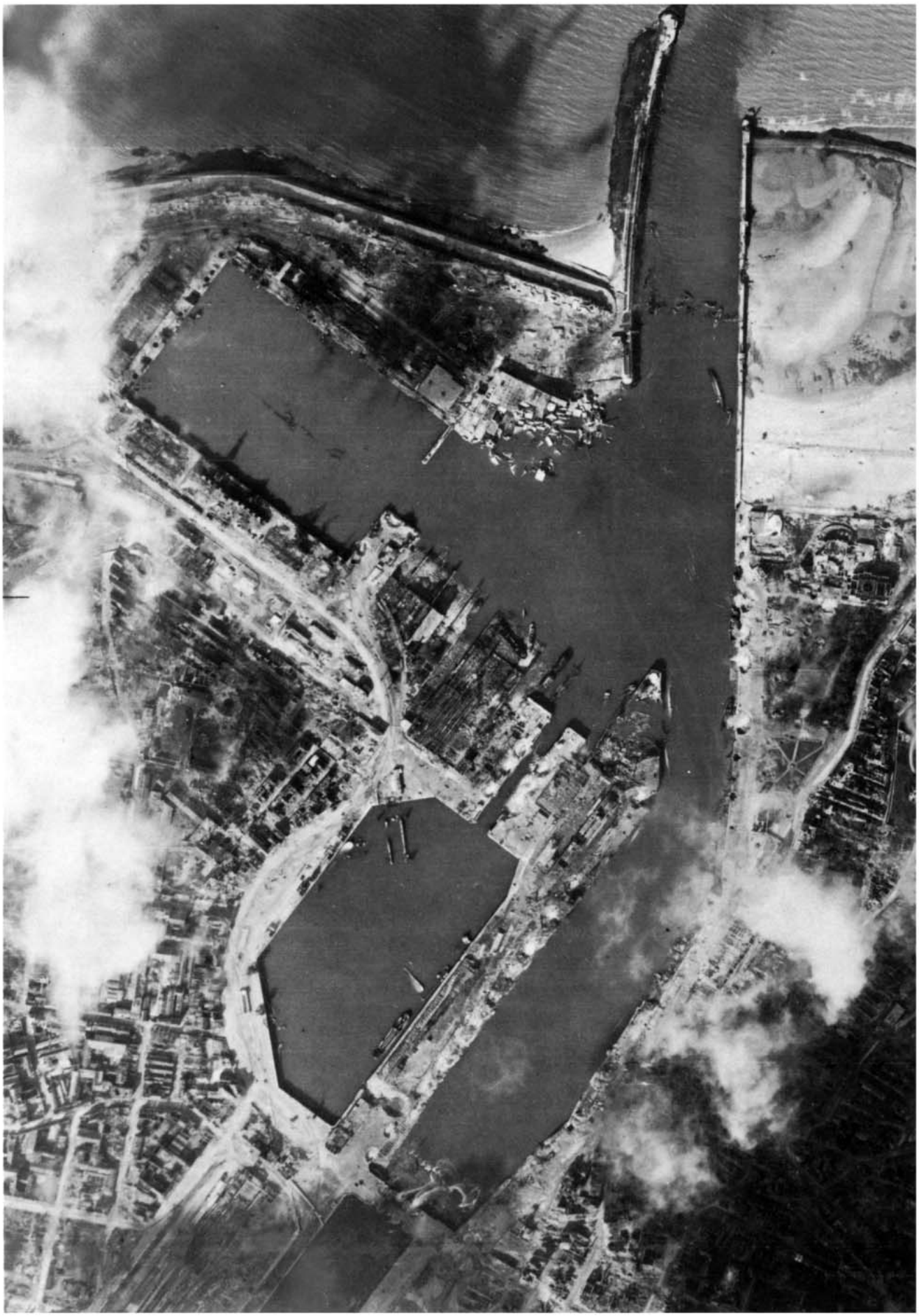
Now came the job of clearing up the destruction from the thousands of tons of bombs dropped in and around the city. Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham, AOC of the RAF's Second Tactical Air Force, was sceptical of the 'wasteful destruction of habitations and the unavoidable heavy loss of life of friendly nationals in the occupied areas'. Experience of heavy bombing in Sicily, at Cassino, and, more recently, at Caen, St Lô and Villers-Bocage, led to, as he phrased it, 'the damaged areas [being] actually improved as centres of defence by snipers and special detachments of the enemy.' And, as occurred at Boulogne, the ground over which the troops had to cross was so choked with rubble and craters that it impeded and even halted the advance of the armoured columns. *Above:* **This is the Quai Gambetta where, in spite of the devastation, the bunkers were still intact. A Canadian soldier still appears wary of hidden snipers two days after the surrender. (IWM)**

Due to the total devastation, the whole of this quay was rebuilt after the war. Air Marshal Coningham wrote in his official post-war despatch that 'the bombing of friendly towns during the campaign, and the insistence by the Army Commanders that it was a military necessity, caused me more personal worry and sorrow than I can say. My resistance, apart from humanitarian grounds, was due to a conviction, since confirmed, that in most cases we were harming Allies and ourselves eventually more than the enemy. I thought, also, of the good name of our forces, and particularly of the Air Force. It is a sad fact that the Air Forces will get practically all blame for destruction which, in almost every case, was due to Army demands. On many occasions, owing to the organisation of command, I was over-ruled and then came the "blotting" by strategic bombers who, on their experience with German targets, tended to over-hit. Ample factual evidence will now be forthcoming, and I hope that, in future, it will not be thought that the sight and sound of bombers, and their uplift effect on morale, is proportional to the damage they do to the enemy.' (IWM)

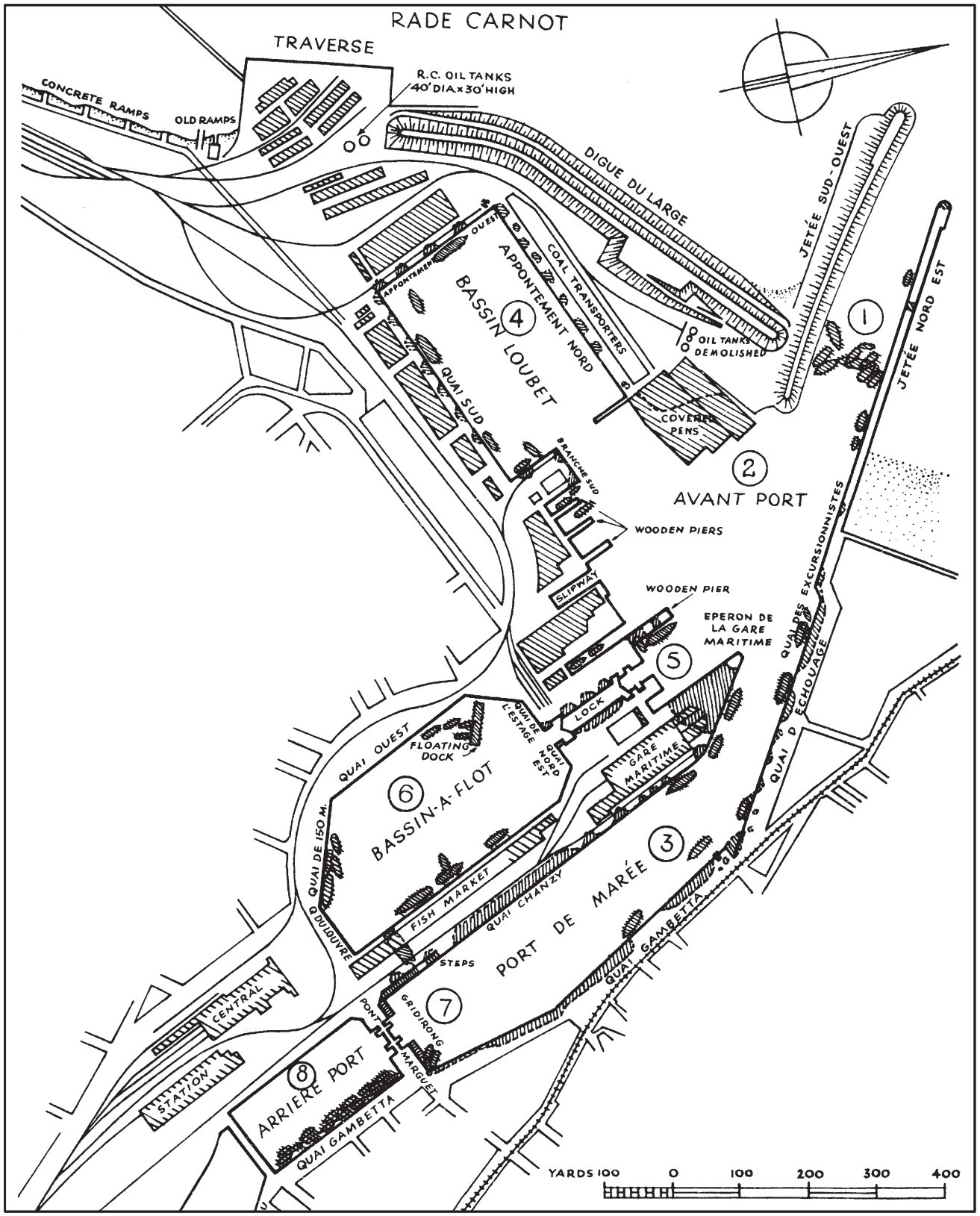
It was the German artillery that caused most of the Canadian losses, and it is evident that the neutralisation of enemy batteries was less effective than at Le Havre. The reason may lie in part in the smaller effort made by Bomber Command, in the absence of naval bombardment (the reason for which was presumably the presence of extremely powerful German coastal batteries in the Pas-de-Calais), and in the fact that ammunition stringency prevented a really heavy artillery counter-battery programme being undertaken before the actual day of the assault. A Canadian artillery commentary on the first day's fighting attributed the failure to silence some batteries partly to the lightness of the concentrations used, 'seldom more than 2 [guns] to 1', and partly to the exceptionally strong construction of the enemy gun positions. Operational researchers estimated in one case, that of a battery of six 88mm guns at Honriville south of the harbour, that the artillery put down 5,700 rounds on it within a circle 300 yards in diameter, but the battery nevertheless continued in action and fired some 2,000 rounds. The same investigators found deficiencies in Canadian artillery intelligence, and hostile battery lists before the operation were found to contain some dummy positions, on which bombs and shells were wasted, while some actual batteries were omitted. Eight previously unknown batteries were reported in action on September 17.

Boulogne had offered the hope of a considerable improvement in the Allies' administrative situation. Though not a major harbour, it had a total seaborne cargo movement, inward and outward, of over a million tons in 1937 and was considered 'the first fishing port of France'. Unfortunately, however, the harbour installations had been extensively damaged by the enemy's demolitions and by bombing during the attack or earlier. Several ships had been sunk across the harbour mouth, most of the cranes had been destroyed and the locks damaged. Consequently, the port could not be brought into use until October 12, and there was no immediate alleviation of the Allied supply problem.

Centre: **This is all that remained of the old Hôtel Folkestone on the Rue de Boston which runs just behind the Quai Gambetta. (IWM)** *Right:* **Although the hotel was not rebuilt, ruins still remain behind the hoardings on what has now been renamed the Rue de Folkestone.**

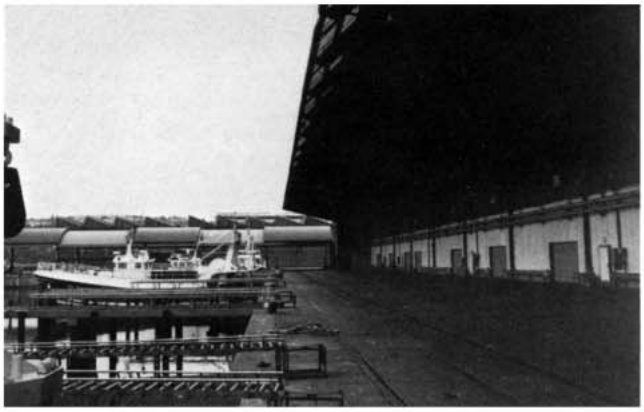


The port pictured by No. 542 Squadron on September 25. Prominent in the centre, the destroyed S-Boat pens. (Keele University)



As the whole purpose of Operation 'Wellhit' was the capture of the port and its speedy rehabilitation, a Port Construction and Repair reconnaissance party was standing by, ready to enter the area as soon as it was reasonably safe to do so. The engineers went in on September 20, while pockets of resistance were still active, and one officer of the reconnaissance party found himself pinned down all day by enemy fire and had to remain under cover till darkness fell. Demolitions were found to be thorough, and extensive blocking by wrecks had been carried out. The general situation they found was as follows (numbers refer to plan): 1. *Entrance Channel* mined, and blocked with sunken craft. 2. *Avant Port* mined, but no obstructions. 3. *Port de Marée*. No sunk craft. Quays completely demolished and cranes wrecked. 4. *Bassin Loubet*. Some craft sunk against quays. Reinforced concrete piled quay, Appontement Nord, breached in nine places, but could be bridged. Appontement Ouest too badly damaged for repair. Quai Sud breached in seven places but repairable. All buildings wrecked. 5. *Locks to Bassin à Flot*. Badly damaged and obstructed by debris; inner gates demolished; outer gates in open position; operating machinery wrecked. 6. *Bassin à Flot*. Craft sunk in three groups, leaving considerable lengths of quay unobstructed. Only one crater in quays. 7. *Locks to Arrière Port*. Lock gates in order and holding water, but approach obstructed by silt and rubble. 8. *Arrière Port*. Quays intact, but Quai Gambetta obstructed by numerous sunk vessels.

As a result of the reconnaissance, a short-term reinstatement plan was drawn up to repair and provide access to the most promising lengths of quay. These were the Quai Sud *(right)* and Appontement Nord in Bassin Loubet; the Quai des Excursionnistes and Quai d'Echouage in the Avant Port; and the Quai Gambetta and Quai Gare Maritime in the Port de Marée. At the same time, the outer lock gates to the Bassin à Flot were to be repaired. The work was allocated to the Royal Engineers' No. 2 Port Reconstruction and Repair Group under Lieutenant-Colonel C. P. Shellbourne, embodying Nos. 935 and 937 Port Construction and Repair Companies supported by No. 238 Company, Pioneer Corps, and No. 44 Mechanical Equipment (Transportation) Section. Work continued for the next three months employing over 300,000 man-hours of labour with another 20,000 hours of plant-hours. Materials totalled 1,142 tons of cement, 7,137 tons of ballast, 10,000 linear feet of piling and a similar amount of RSJs, and 170,000 feet of steel reinforcement. (IWM)



Above left: Priority was given to the repairs in the Bassin Loubet, as the Quai Sud offered the deepest water in the port (28 feet). Here, heavy timber piles have been sunk in one of the craters and cross-braced ready to receive the horizontal beams which had to be improvised by welding together two sections of steel piling to form a box-section. Steel troughing was then placed on top of this and concreted to form the new roadway. Repair of the Quai Sud was started on September 26 and completed four days later, having absorbed a total of 60,000 man-hours. (IWM) *Above right:* Today, a Nouvelle Halle, constructed for the Boulogne fishing fleet, stands on the quayside.

In this view, we are looking north-west past the Casino towards the S-Boat pens at the entrance to Bassin Loubet. (IWM)

While the Royal Engineers commenced working on the repair of the quays, the Royal Navy began assisting in mine-sweeping and salvage in the harbour itself, priority being given to the removal of the sunken ships in the entrance channel *(above left)*. **Although explosives were used to try to disperse the wrecks** *(above right)*, **it proved a very difficult task; so much so that it looked as if the quays might be finished before the berths alongside were cleared. Urgent attention was therefore also given to opening up the Bassin à Flot which could yield undamaged quays, even though it could only offer a 21-ft depth, as soon as the lock gates could be repaired. Work began on October 3 and was about half complete when the coaster *Guernsey Queen* struck a mine right outside the lock, completely blocking the entrance. Even though extra help was rushed in by the Port Construction and Repair troops, the wreck was not cleared until November 20. (IWM)**

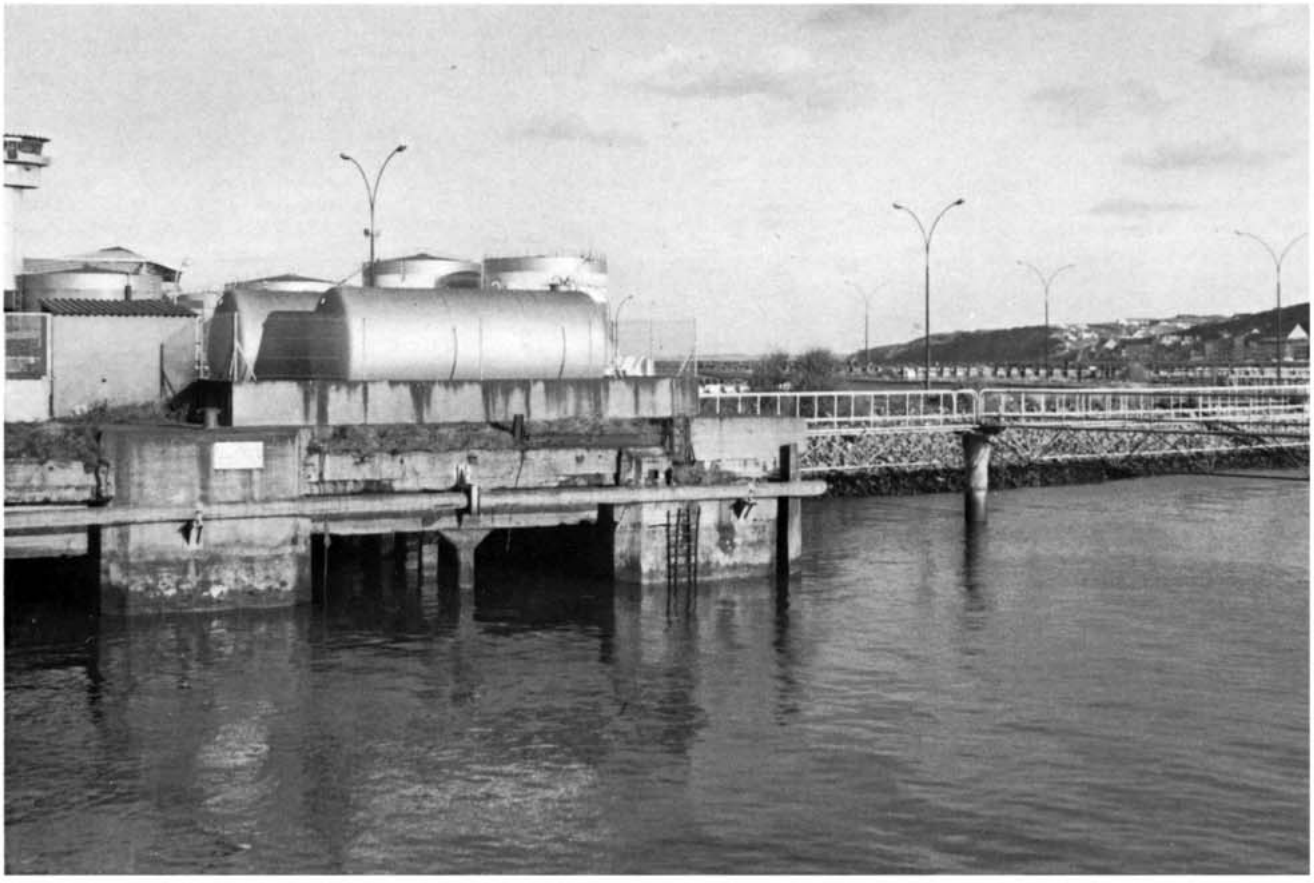
The bunker where the engineers watched the blasting of the wreckage still stands on the Jetée Sud-Ouest with the harbour traffic light system mounted over the embrasures. The interior is in remarkably sound condition.

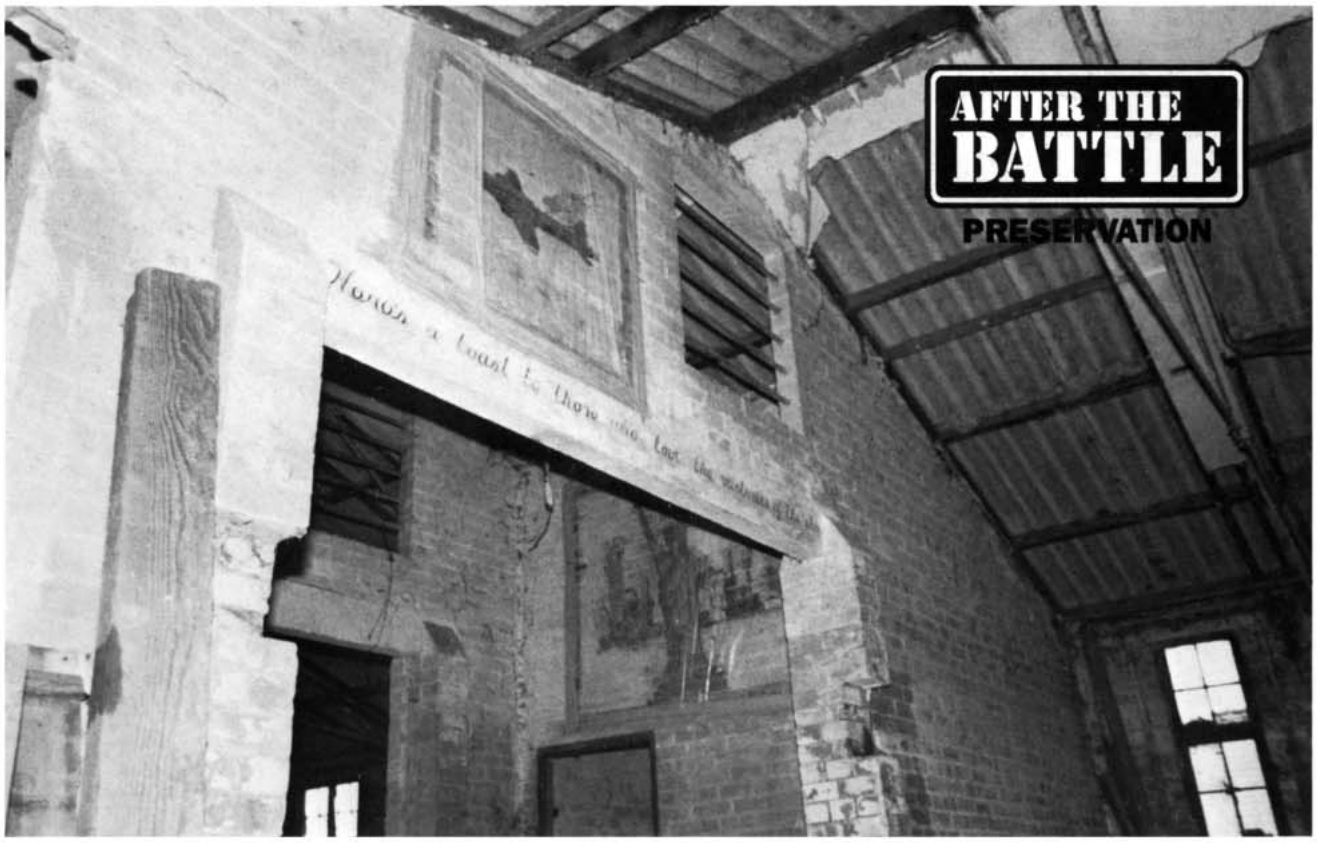
Today the Casino has been rebuilt and the pens demolished. The picture was taken from the fire control bunker.

Parallel with the mine and wreck clearance and the rebuilding of the quays in the Bassin Loubet, work began on the Quai des Excursionnistes, Quai d'Echouage and Quai Gambetta *(left)*. Although the water depth was less, these quays offered a fairly quick solution for berths for coasters and personnel ships. Three breaches were repaired by renewing the columns and beams, covering the gaps with steel sheet piling used as troughing, and casting a new slab which was then paved flush with the existing roadway. However, the work still took several weeks and the three quays were not completed until November 4, by which time Ostend was coming on stream and Antwerp was offering the prospect of unlimited facilities. (IWM)

Antwerp received its first convoy on November 28, effecting a complete revolution for the supply-starved Allied armies. Boulogne, along with Dieppe, Ostend and Calais, then took on a lesser rôle as British-occupied ports, along with the American-operated Le Havre, Rouen and Cherbourg. After the war, Boulogne re-established its commercial activities although its traditional position as one of the main entry ports for France was put in jeopardy in 1993 when the cross-Channel passenger ferry link with Folkestone was withdrawn. Compare this 1993 picture with the 1945 shot on page 18. (IGN)

Above: **One structure not subject to RE repairs was the S-Boat shelter which had been built at the southern end of the Appontement Nord. Its reinforced concrete roof was 12 feet thick but this had been partially demolished. (IWM)** *Below:* **Fortunately for 'after the battle' afficionados, a small section still remains to be seen, supporting storage tanks.**





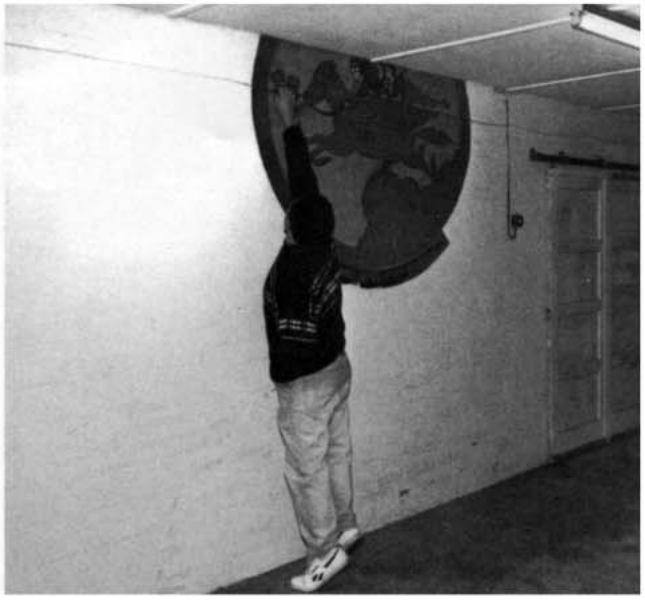
EIGHTH WALL ART CONSERVATION SOCIETY

As far as it is known, the first piece of wall art removed from a Second World War base in Britain was that of a Stirling Mk III from the airfield once occupied by No. 199 Squadron at North Creake, Norfolk. In October 1983, members of the Fenland Aircraft Preservation Society successfully cut out the painting of the bomber, complete on a 6ft × 4ft section of brickwork, which was then transported for display at the RAF Museum at Hendon.

Their achievement proved that the deteriorating wall paintings, a unique legacy left by budding wartime artists whiling away their time between operations, need not be lost just because they are painted on brickwork, and that it was possible to remove a large section of wall intact without it breaking. However, it was left to enthusiasts, rather than official bodies, to bring the concept to fruition. Four years later, the Eighth Wall Art Conservation Society (EWACS) was formed by a group of British volunteers, the title by definition stemming from the fact that wall art was mainly, yet not exclusively, the preserve of American units stationed in Britain.

Most wartime camps in Britain were constructed by the Ministry of Works on agency terms: from those for auxiliary fire brigades and civil defence workers, to those housing building workers, for the War Office, Royal Air Force and, from 1942, for the United States Army Air Force. Also that year, the first prisoner-of-war camps undertaken by the Ministry for the War Office were completed, some camps being built by the prisoners themselves. Quite separately, the 'Bolero' programme for American forces was carried out from 1942 to 1944 leading to a vast increase in building works to accommodate upwards of 1½ million servicemen due to arrive from the USA. All methods of construction were used: prefabricated, Nissen (or Quonset) hutting, wooden frame,

Ten years ago, it seemed that wartime wall art was doomed to be lost as time, man, and the elements conspired to destroy that which remained. True, the paintings which still survived could be recorded on film, but that could only be a poor substitute for preserving the real thing. Now, thanks to the pioneering work by the Eighth Wall Art Conservation Group, the future of many of the paintings is assured — and still on the original brickwork! *Top:* **Typical piece of nostalgia in the enlisted men's club at the old 361st Fighter Group base at Bottisham.** *Left:* **EWACS get down to business. The building was due to be demolished, so an operation was mounted in the summer of 1987 to see if sections could be removed from the walls without the brickwork cracking.** *Right:* **The operation proved remarkably successful and a system was developed of supporting the piece to be removed using a timber framework prior to slicing it out with a disc cutter.**



Above and below: **This 76th Troop Carrier Squadron insignia, still in beautiful condition at Membury, was removed by EWACS for preservation by the Ridgeway Military and Aviation Research Group.**

Overleaf: **However, the Big Picture at Podington had deteriorated since we illustrated it in 1980 (see *After the Battle* No. 30).Thanks to the group mounting a major removal operation, it can now be seen at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford.**

and brick, mainly 4½-inch single thickness, sometimes with a one-inch rendering on the exterior. There was no interior cladding, no cavity walls, and the interiors were bitterly cold in winter, warmed only by a single stove to a room. Walls were bare brick distempered.

The majority of wooden and Nissen buildings have long since gone and one is very fortunate to still find wall art existing on the interior of any huts that do remain (although we had an extremely lucky find in 1979 at Tubney Wood before that camp was demolished — see *After the Battle* No. 62). Those paintings on brick, if on interior walls, have survived in fairly good condition (see *After the Battle* No. 30), although increasing numbers of such buildings have been lost in recent years. Those that survive are usually in use for agricultural purposes or by light industry, particularly associated with the motor trade. In some cases, paintings have been protected by later coats of whitewash or emulsion, helping to preserve the original underneath, but in others the ravages of the elements on the unheated, damp buildings have led to a drastic deterioration of the art that does survive. With time running out, EWACS' mission is to recover for preservation what still remains.

Bearing in mind that none of the wartime buildings are owned by the group, everything depends on the goodwill of the landowner. In some cases, a far-sighted owner contacts the group, like Martin Sheldrick at the RAF/USAAF satellite airfield at Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire. In 1980, we included an illustration in *The Battle of Britain Then and Now* of the beautiful 9ft set of RAF wings in one of the barns at Manor Farm. Subsequently, Martin was contacted by the original artist, Robert Hofton, and he invited him back to restore the painting. However, Martin realised that while he may be very preservation minded, a subsequent owner of the farm might not be, and he is anxious that the painting (this one on 9-inch brickwork) should be removed for preservation by EWACS and be exhibited at Duxford.

However, there are some who see nothing special in the wartime art, and have no desire to see it preserved in a museum. 'I think they should just be left to deteriorate naturally', said one ex-wartime airfield owner. 'I don't want them preserved and I don't want them removed. Just let them go, and if one day we decide to knock down the buildings, then the paintings will go with them.'

Fortunately, EWACS have received some support from private individuals and public bodies alike. Their first project, during the summer of 1987, was at the former 361st Fighter Group base at Bottisham, five miles east of Cambridge. The four-month project in the old enlisted men's club led to the removal of seven wall paintings and two lintels, and the experience gained led to the adoption of a fairly standard working procedure.

Each picture has to be looked at very closely to see if there are any cracks or if the cement is showing any signs of deterioration, in which case they have to be pinned or bonded together using special adhesive. Special techniques have been developed for cutting out these pictures, depending on the materials they have been painted with.

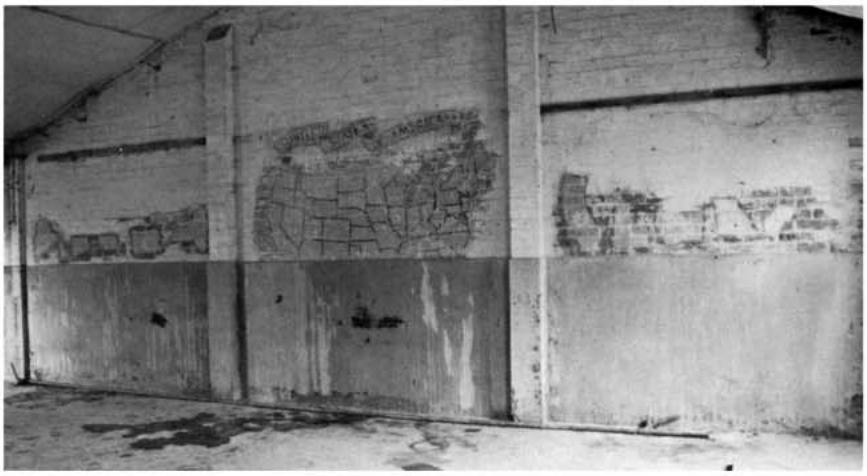
A standard timber framework has been developed for smaller pictures which can be adjusted to meet individual requirements. For larger pictures, steel framework has to be specially made, which EWACS design themselves, taking into account stress and strain. (The 'Big Picture' at Duxford is still supported by its purpose-made steel frame.) After the framework has been secured and the cutting completed, the picture has to be carefully lifted, either by manhandling or with the help of a fork-lift truck, and loaded on to transport. In the case of the Bottisham operation, this was provided by the United States Air Force which then distributed the sections of brickwork to various USAF bases and museums in this country and even shipped one to the 8th AAF Museum in Barksdale, Louisiana.

HYSTER

HYSTER

B

EWACS also carries out judicious restoration where this would enhance a particular piece of evacuated artwork. *Left:* **This is the long-forgotten blonde who looked out from a 'beach' at Kimbolton.** *Right:* **New legs . . . new lips . . . new swimsuit; the crew of the KC-135 tanker from today's Eighth Air Force who flew it to the States seem to approve.**



Sometimes illustrations have been hidden beneath subsequent layers of paint — like these long-lost squadron badges *(left)* **at Bungay.** *Above:* **In another part of the same building, a map of the United States gradually revealed itself, state by state.**

The next project, in March 1988, was at the former 379th Bomb Group airfield of Kimbolton where a picture of a girl on a beach was removed for exhibition at the present 379th Bomb Wing base at Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan. Another painting (a Red Indian astride a bomb — the insignia of the 18th Bomb Squadron — *see page 49, issue 30*) was removed from Mendelsham, former home of the 34th Bomb Group, in October 1988 for the Horham Red Feather Club before the group tackled a huge 12ft × 8ft B-17 at the 92nd Bomb Group base at Podington, Bedfordshire. In this case, with the weight at 1½ tons, a purpose-made steel frame was used to support the brick section which can now be seen displayed in the Eighth Air Force display at Duxford.

Other achievements included the restoration of vandalised illustrations like this one carried out in February 1992 at the Red Feather Club at Horham — a former NCOs' club, now the location of a proposed 95th BG museum.

At Fowlmere, Martin Sheldrik invited the original artist to return to restore the painting, in what was then the mess, that he had completed for a Christmas dance in December 1940. Robert Hofton was an aircraftsman serving with No. 19 Squadron and he recalled that he had painted the RAF wings with dope thinned with petrol. The fumes were so overpowering in the confined space that he had to constantly come up for air. Now EWACS hopes the money can be raised to remove this section of the 9-inch wall — quite a hefty job as all the other 'evacuations' to date have been on 4½-inch brickwork.

Not all these pictures are removed, some are restored and preserved where they stand. A good example of this is at Bungay, former home of the 446th Bomb Group. In October 1991, the group had a major find in one of the existing buildings. At first, only a small part of a map of the USA could be seen, but after very careful cleaning the whole map was uncovered, showing place-names and names of personnel who served with the 446th BG. Further careful cleaning revealed drawings of each individual American state, showing towns and people's names. In another room, two squadron badges in remarkably good condition were also uncovered. The pictures have been treated with a special protective coating, only obtainable from Germany.

The group was also called upon in February 1992 to repair and restore the well-known paintings of the medieval scenes at the Red Feather Club at Horham which had been vandalised. This was completed before the 95th Bomb Group veterans returned in May 1992 for their reunion.

EWACS ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

Murals	*Present location*
Bottisham 361st Fighter Group	
Statue of Liberty	RAF Lakenheath (USAF).
Flying Tractor	Thorpe Abbots 100th Bomb Group Museum.
Eighth Insignia	8th AAF Museum, Barksdale, Louisiana.
Cook RAF	Imperial War Museum, Duxford.
GI mechanic astride aeroplane	Essex Aviation Group Museum, Duxford.
Ship	British Legion Club, Bottisham.
Lintel with squadron badges	Fenland Aviation Museum, Wisbech, Cambs.
Lintel with inscription and wall painting of a B-17 shadowed by a P-51 Mustang	RAF Molesworth (USAF).
Kimbolton 379th Bombardment Group (H)	
Girl on Beach	Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Michigan. (On April 18, 1990, it was flown from RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, to Wurtsmith by a KC-135 tanker of the 379th Bomb Wing — a unit of the present day Eighth Air Force.)
Mendelsham 34th Bombardment Group (H)	
Red Indian Chief astride bomb	Horham (Red Feather Club) Suffolk.
Podington 92nd Bombardment Group (H)	
The Big Picture (B-17) Artist Staff Sergeant Waldschmidt Found in briefing/debriefing room of the 325th Bomb Squadron Aircraft pictured NV✪Q 43–38877	Imperial War Museum, Duxford.
Bungay 446th Bombardment Group (H)	
Map of USA and separate states 704th and 706th Squadrons' insignias	Paintings cleaned and preserved still in situ at Bungay. Building still in use and locked — permission must be sought from landowner to view paintings.
Horham 34th Bombardment Group (H)	
Medieval Scenes	Paintings restored and preserved at Red Feather Club. Building is locked and arrangements must be made to view paintings.
Membury 436th Troop Carrier Group	
76th Troop Carrier Squadron Insignia	Ridgeway Military and Aviation Research Group Museum at RAF Welford (USAF), Berkshire (visits by appointment only).

In our last issue, we reported on the demolition of Island Farm prisoner-of-war camp at Bridgend in South Wales. Fortunately, the local council were minded to call in EWACS to remove the artwork before the contractors moved in. *Above:* **'Cora' is cut down to size — we showed her in her former glory on the back cover of issue 67.**

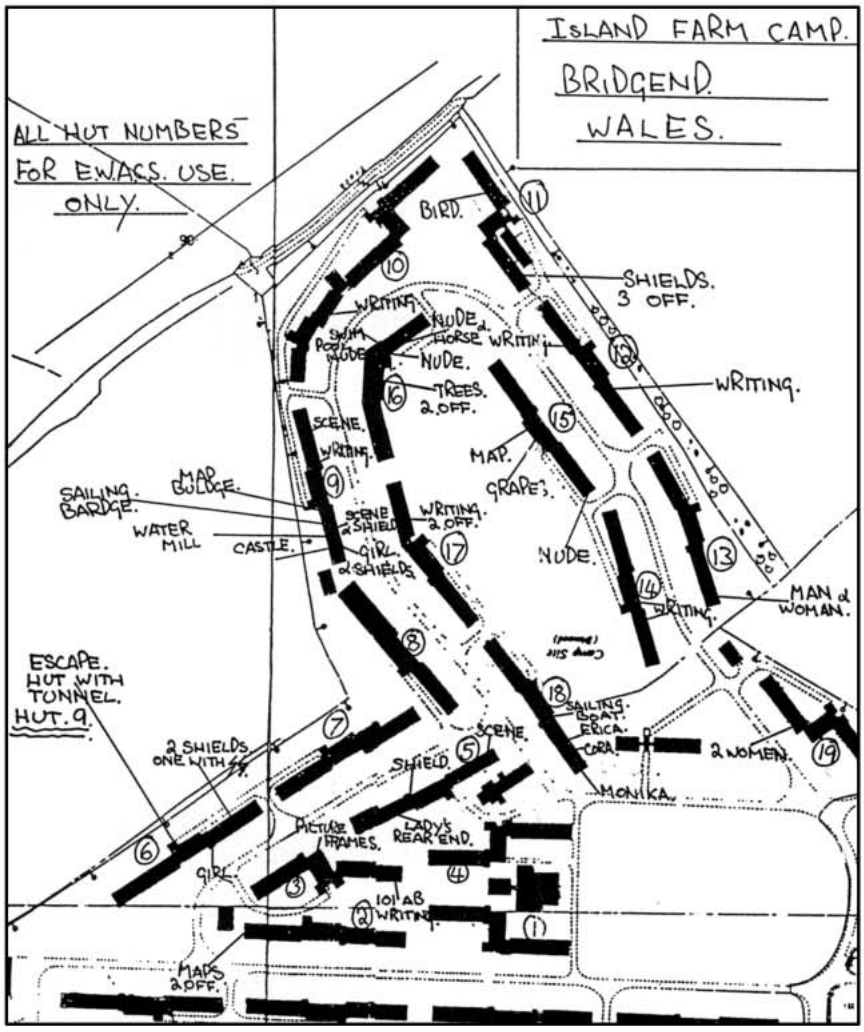
With the impending demolition of Island Farm PoW camp (reported in our last issue — see also *After the Battle* No. 67), Mid Glamorgan County Council approached the group in March 1992 with a request to remove every worthwhile picture and drawing in the first formal employment of EWACS in a full-scale preservation project.

ISLAND FARM PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP, MARCH 1992–MARCH 1994

Description	*Medium*	*Size (inches)*
Flower	Pencil	19×25
Aeroplanes	Pencil	20×23
Bunch of Grapes	Stencil	15×17
Poem: 'Lieb So Lang'	Pencil	26×17
Erica	Pencil	21×24
Horse	Paint	17×14
Shield	Paint	21×18
Mill Scene	Pencil	48×24
Gothic Scene	Pencil	45×24
Cora	Paint	31×41
Anna	Pencil	22×63
Monika	Pencil	34×73
Sailing Barge	Paint	32×24
Map	Pencil	25×32
Forest Scene	Pencil	29×26
Reclining Nude	Pencil	54×31
Map	Pencil	48×75
Map	Pencil	70×67
Inscription: 'Für unsteit . . . '	Paint	20×7
Ulla	Paint	18×63
Inscription: 'Einem verzagten . . . '	Paint	
Girl's face and hairdo	Paint	18×24
Scene	Pencil	29×34
Scene	Pencil	29×34
2nd Platoon Bulletin Board	Paint	24×8
Inscription: 'Unfrei ist nicht ehrlos' *	Paint	18×18
Face and curvaceous nude	Paint	20×28
Nude	Paint	20×32
Inscription: '. . . uhr hagsrub'	Paint	
Birds in Reeds	Paint	24×28

* Translation: 'To be a prisoner is not dishonourable'

All the illustrations and inscriptions were removed from the camp, preserving a unique piece of British — and German — history.



Even so, all the time spent by the group members was freely donated, the council providing the necessary materials, i.e. timber, cutting discs, generators, transport, etc. The best 11 pictures were removed over three weekends during October 1992 and, when it was later decided that the camp would have to be demolished, the council asked the group if they could come back and save as many as possible of the remaining pictures. This resulted in an operation to remove a further 16 paintings during two weekends in March 1994. It is now the council's intention to incorporate some of the pictures into Hut 9, which has been preserved.

Currently, EWACS are seeking sponsorship of £1,500 for steel and building materials necessary to remove the Folwmere 'wings'; interested parties should contact the group secretary, Peter Dyer, 15 Adamsrill Road, Sydenham, London, SE26 4AL.

EWACS would like to convey their thanks to all persons who have given their support in the past.

Above: **'Everything for our homeland' — a nice sentiment, but** *(right)* **an unknown Bavarian believes that 'All young boys with leather trousers keep their tackle in good order'!**

THE MARKET GARDEN CORRIDOR TOUR

By Karel Margry

After the 50th anniversary of the Normandy landings in June, the next main event in this year's series of jubilee commemorations of the North-West European campaign of 1944-45 was that of Operation 'Market Garden', the airborne landings at Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Arnhem of September 1944.

Like in Normandy, preparations for the anniversary celebrations had started early, with many local committees planning their own festivities, wreath-laying ceremonies, remembrance services, unveiling of memorials, exhibitions, programmes for visiting groups of veterans, etc.

However, it was felt that a series of unconnected local festivities would not do justice to the importance and magnitude of the operation and, in January 1993, a 'Market Garden Foundation 1944-1994' was set up to organise larger-scale events that in some way

September 1994. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Operation 'Market Garden', a Market Garden Corridor Tour for historic military vehicles was held on September 18, 1994, designed to recreate the advance of XXX Corps through the Corridor, the road from the Belgian border to Nijmegen, christened 'The Club Route' by XXX Corps and 'Hell's Highway' by the US airborne troops defending it. Vehicle conservation groups everywhere were invited to take part. With some 800 vehicles taking part and over one million spectators along the route, it became the largest event of the commemorations in Holland.

Coupled with the tour, and to recreate the airborne aspect of 'Market Garden', mass drops of serving paratroop units and veterans were to take place on the historic dropzones of the three airborne divisions involved on the preceding day, Saturday, September 17. Unfortunately, very bad weather caused a large part of that programme to be cancelled, none of the veterans jumping and only the British on Ginkel Heath being able to have all their troops make the jump. At Son, only about 60 American troopers from today's 101st Airborne Division were able to jump before further drops had to be abandoned.

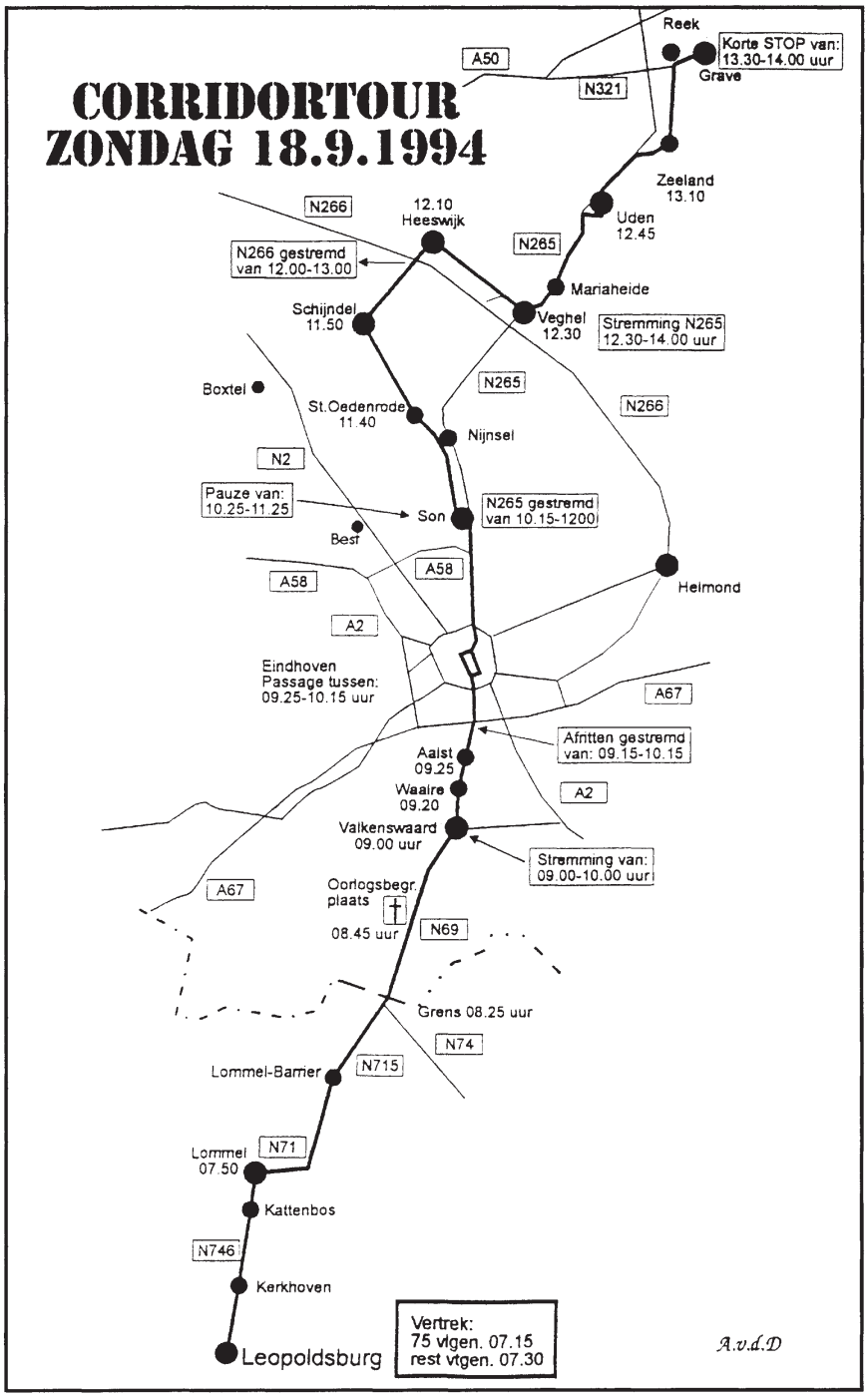
With some 800 vehicles from nine countries taking part, the Corridor Tour was by far the largest movement of WW2 vehicles through this part of Holland since the war — although, of course, it was still a far cry from the 20,000 vehicles XXX Corps had lined up in 1944. Even so, it offered us a one-time-only opportunity to make some unique comparison shots. This is the Maas river bridge at Grave, historic landmark on the Corridor, then and now.

would link the local activities into one large commemoration. The driving force behind the foundation was Carel ten Horn, a semi-retired business consultant and owner of a private Liberation Museum at Gemonde near 's-Hertogenbosch, who, as a young boy, had lived through the fighting at Nijmegen.

The foundation soon found that the activities it had in mind should be limited to the area of the 'corridor' — the towns and villages along the one road from the Belgian border north to Nijmegen and across the Waal river, i.e. the operational area of the US 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions and British XXX Corps. The municipalities of Arnhem, Renkum (which includes Oosterbeek) and Driel — the operational area of the British 1st Airborne Division and the Polish Parachute Brigade — opted to remain outside the foundation and organise their commemorations independently, in the way they had been done in the past 49 years.

There was a clear and understandable reason behind this choice. Commemorations of 'Market Garden' in the Netherlands have always been marked by a certain dichotomy: those in the Eindhoven and Nijmegen areas having a more festive character, celebrating liberation by Allied troops and the return of freedom, and those in the Arnhem-Oosterbeek area being characterised by a more sorrowful remembering of defeat in battle, of friends lost, of destruction and evacuation — the difference of course being caused by the different course the battle took in the respective regions.

The Market Garden Foundation as it finally became operational was chaired by the burgomaster of Eindhoven, Dr R. W. Welschen, and included representatives from the municipalities of Eindhoven, Veghel, Grave, Groesbeek and Nijmegen and of the two Dutch provinces involved, Brabant and Gelderland. Other organisations taking part were the Society of Dutch Airborne Friends (who foster the contacts with the veterans of the 101st Airborne Division); the Groesbeek Airborne Friends & Holland Chapter of the 82nd Airborne Division and C-47 Club (who do the same for the 82nd Airborne and troop carrier veterans); the Wings of Liberation Museum at Veghel; the 18 September Festival Foundation at Eindhoven; the October 1944 Foundation at 's-Hertogenbosch; the Foundation for Brabant Regional History; and the Dutch Stoottroepers Regiment Association. Thus it was a true umbrella organisation.



Except for a short detour through Schijndel and Heeswijk-Dinther, the tour followed exactly the same route as XXX Corps in 1944. This map shows planned arrival times for the first leg of the tour and the temporary road restrictions.

Left: **Valkenswaard, September 18, 1944. Located ten miles inside Holland, Valkenswaard was the first town reached by the Guards Armoured Division after their initial push through the German front at the Dutch-Belgian border. (IWM)**
Above: **Valkenswaard, September 18, 1994. St Nicolaas Church still overlooks the town square and, despite the early hour, the population has come out in force to welcome the tour. Keep Them Rolling stands in for the Household Cavalry.**

The foundation undertook to organise two large-scale events. To commemorate the airborne part of 'Market Garden', it planned mass paradrops on the historic drop-zones at Son (where the 101st Airborne had landed) and at Groesbeek (where the 82nd Airborne had come down), coupled with a fly-past of a large number of historic aircraft. This was to take place on Saturday, September 17, the anniversary of the starting day of 'Market Garden'. The drop at Son was to be performed by 125 paratroopers of what is today called the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) plus a contingent of 34 para-commandos of the Dutch Army; that at Groesbeek by 125 serving members of the 82nd Airborne Division and another group of 34 Dutch paras. Like at Arnhem, where a group of 70 British airborne veterans were planning to restage the jump they had made 50 years ago, veterans of the American airborne divisions — five of the 82nd and sixteen of the 101st — would jump once more on their respective DZs. These drops would be made from vintage Dakotas.

The fly-past was to include (in order of flight): four Piper Super Cubs (towing civilian gliders to a landing zone at Groesbeek), four Austers, four Tiger Moths, four Harvards, three B-25 Mitchells, five C-47 Dakotas, two B-17 Flying Fortresses, four P-51 Mustangs and three Spitfires — 33 historic aircraft in all. In addition to that would be the C-130s and Fokker F-27s carrying the paratroopers, an air show by four Grasshopper helicopters, and a fly-past of a B-1 bomber, four F-16s, four F-15s and four Tornados.

To commemorate the ground part of 'Market Garden', the foundation wanted to recreate the advance of XXX Corps through the Corridor by organising a 'Market Garden Corridor Tour' for historic military vehicles which would follow the same route as the Guards Armoured Division, the spearhead of XXX Corps in September 1944. This would take place on Sunday, September 18 — the second day of the commemorations.

The tour would start at Leopoldsburg (Bourg Leopold) in Belgium — where 50 years ago, in the local cinema, Lieutenant-General Brian Horrocks had briefed the commanders and staffs of his corps' sub-units on the forthcoming operation. After crossing Joe's Bridge across the Meuse-Escaut Canal (see *After the Battle* No. 17) and the Belgian-Dutch border, the tour would wind its way north, through Valkenswaard, Aalst, Eindhoven, Son, Sint-Oedenrode, Veghel, Uden, Reek, Grave, Overasselt, Mook, Groesbeek to Nijmegen, where it would cross the big Waal river bridge and make a circuit through Lent, Oosterhout, Valburg and Elst and back to Nijmegen.

The idea was that veterans of 1944 who desired so could mount the vehicles for part or all of the tour and re-enact their advance into Holland of 50 years ago. This would give an added dimension to the event and give the Dutch population an opportunity to honour their liberators. A place would be reserved for them among the leading 75 vehicles of the column. Included in the tour itinerary were special stops at Eindhoven and at Grave to allow the veterans to get aboard.

Carried in the tour would be the Torch of Liberation, a flame brought to Holland from Bayeux in Normandy and symbolising the freedom brought by the Allied armies in 1944. This would be used to light separate Liberation Fires in the individual towns and villages passed along the route. The tradition of bringing a flame from Bayeux was started by the municipality of Eindhoven in 1946 and has been upheld ever since. This year, the flame was to arrive in Holland one day early, on the 17th, and be stored at Valkenswaard, there to be picked up on the 18th by a half-track riding in the leading group.

1944. On the morning of the 18th, now already 12 hours behind schedule, the Guards resume the advance to Eindhoven. (IWM)

1994. Fifty years later to the day, a seemingly-endless column of vintage wartime vehicles again roars through Valkenswaard.

1944. At about 10 a.m., cautiously and in combat formation, the leading Shermans and infantrymen of the Irish Guards and the armoured cars of the Household Cavalry enter the next village, Aalst. (C. Nix)

1994. Aalst is halfway between Valkenswaard and Eindhoven. Where, on that morning 50 years ago, the inhabitants dared only observe the Allies' entry from their doorways, now the whole population is out to greet the first vehicles.

To commemorate one of the decisive, and certainly one of the most dramatic, moments of 'Market Garden' — the capture of the Waal bridges at Nijmegen on September 20 by American paratroopers crossing the river in assault boats, and British tankers attacking across the road bridge — a special ceremony was planned as part of the tour. After the column with the Liberation Torch had reached Nijmegen, scheduled for 4 p.m., veterans of the US 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and of the 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion, who had carried out the daring assault crossing 50 years ago, would first cross the Waal in DUKW amphibious trucks from the Nijmegen side of the river, carrying the flame with them. Then, at 4.30 p.m., a group of Sherman tanks carrying Grenadier Guards veterans would cross the road bridge — re-enacting the lone attack by Sergeant Peter Robinson's four-tank troop of No. 1 Squadron, 2nd Grenadier Guards, on that dramatic Wednesday 50 years before — and link up with the DUKWs on the far side. In the leading Sherman would be Lord Carrington, known the world over as the former Secretary General of NATO, but in 1944 Captain Lord Peter Carrington, second-in-command of No. 1 Squadron of the 2nd Grenadier Guards and one of the first to cross the bridge after its capture. The American veterans would hand over the Liberation Flame to Lord Carrington, who would then return across the bridge and light the fire at the Nijmegen war memorial which overlooks the bridge roundabout.

Military vehicle conservation groups in Holland and abroad were invited to take part in the commemorative tour. Participation was for vehicles of Allied origin only. Soon, the list of vehicles began to grow. Amongst those agreeing to take part were the Dutch associations 'Keep Them Rolling' and 'Wheels', the Military Vehicle Trust and the Invicta military vehicle group from Britain, the MVT and 'Hell on Wheels' from Belgium, numerous individual vehicles from France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Germany and even a few members of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association from the US. By early September, some 780 vehicles had registered for the tour. Remembering the criticism levelled against some of the vehicle crews after the D-Day commemorations in June concerning dress and behaviour, the foundation made a request to the people taking part to wear period costume as much as possible and to refrain from too much jubilation.

Meanwhile, in collaboration with local authorities and regional and local police corps, detailed preparations were made for the temporary closure of the Corridor road, for diverting other traffic, and for handling the thousands of spectators who were expected to line the road on the day of the tour.

The N265, the road from Eindhoven to Nijmegen is one of the few major roads in Holland which has not been turned into a dual carriageway since the war. Apart from a few bypass ring-roads — at Eindhoven, Sint-Oedenrode, Veghel and Uden — the road still is, and looks, essentially the same as in 1944. This is fortunate from a historic point of view, but a nightmare from a traffic and transport point of view. Traffic on it is always busy, there are many level crossings with traffic lights, and regular traffic jams, especially at Son, where the canal bridge, although widened and modernised, is still a bottleneck. Rather than take the direct road from Eindhoven to Nijmegen, many motorists today prefer to take the route via 's-Hertogenbosch, which is longer but mostly dual carriageway or autoroute.

To handle a 780-vehicle column along this road, a kilometre-by-kilometre route scheme was prepared, giving by-the-minute timings for the head of the column to enter a village or pass a certain crossroads. The tour was estimated to require 9 hours and 12 minutes to cover the 130 kilometres to Nijmegen and 11 hours 45 minutes for the entire stretch of 162 kilometres. It was calculated that the column would extend to at least 15 kilometres and take between 45 to 60 minutes to pass any given point. Along the way, certain leeway stops were planned to make up for possible loss of time: at 10.30 (52,3 km), a one-hour pause at Son; at 1.35 p.m. (99,9 km), a 25-minute stop at Grave; at 3.18 p.m. (124,8 km), a 12-minute stop at the Heilige Land Stichting outside Nijmegen, to line up the column for the drive through the city; and at 3.58 p.m. (131,4 km), a one-hour stop on the Waal boulevard during the Waal crossing ceremony.

1944. At Aalst, the Guards were held up for nearly eight hours by a few German guns sited just beyond the village and firing point-blank down the road. As the whole XXX Corps column came to a stop, the locals had plenty of time to talk to their liberators. (Van de Poll)

1994. Fifty years later, the column halts at Aalst again, this time because a stop is planned at Motel Eindhoven just beyond to enable veterans to board the tour. By a curious coincidence, the motel stands on exactly the same spot as the German guns of 1944!

Left: **1944. Eindhoven, already entered by the 101st Airborne early on the 18th, was not reached by the Guards until 6 p.m. that day. Here, Cromwells of the 15/19th Hussars, assigned to support the Americans at Eindhoven, follow the Guards into the city. (A. van Beurden)**

Right: **1994. Today, Eindhoven is a much larger and more modern city than it was in 1944 and building development has changed much of its appearance. This part of the 'Club Route', Stratumsedijk on the southern entry road, has changed beyond recognition, but the welcome is just as enthusiastic.**

The foundation first presented its plans at a press conference in the Province House of the Province of Brabant on September 20, 1993. To co-ordinate local initiatives, the foundation published a special *Market Garden Newsletter*, which had five editions between September 1993 and September 1994. A final press conference was laid on for the national press on August 25, 1994, and a special day organised for the international press, which included a DUKW crossing of the Waal, on September 9.

By the second week of September, things began to roll. Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division flew in to Gilze-Rijen aerodrome from their home base at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and were stationed at the Oirschot Barracks near Eindhoven. The contingent of the 82nd Airborne flew in to Schiphol Airport from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on the 15th (just in the hours in which the rest of the division was tensely awaiting a possible 'go' for the US intervention in Haiti) and were based at Camp Soesterberg near Utrecht. Groups of American airborne and troop carrier veterans began arriving from the United States. Arnhem veterans returned once more to Oosterbeek and its surrounding towns and villages, so familiar to them from earlier pilgrimages. Several thousand other British veterans, in coach parties organised by the British Legion, the Market Garden Veterans Association or the various regimental associations, arrived in Nijmegen where the Dutch Ministry of Defence had made available the Limos Barracks to accommodate them.

Everything had been planned like a military operation. And, like in a military operation, there was one thing the planners could not predict or control: the weather. As it happened, bad weather interfered with many of the 'Market Garden' commemorations and, especially on the Saturday, several events had to be changed at the last minute or even cancelled owing to the low clouds, the wind and the rain. In this respect, the 50th anniversary suffered much the same fate as the real operation of 1944.

At all three of the historic drop-zones — Ginkel Heath, Groesbeek and Son — the planned drop of veterans had to be cancelled. (The British veterans and those of the 82nd Airborne did jump over Teuge airfield near Apeldoorn the next day.) Of the planned air show, about half of the historic aircraft — the Pipers and Tiger Moths, three of the Harvards, two of the Mitchells, two Mustangs and one Spitfire — did take off from Eindhoven Airport, but the planned time schedule could not be kept and the planes arrived over the Son drop-zone late and in small packets; they overflew part of the Corridor, but only the four Pipers went to Groesbeek as planned. As for the mass paradrops, at Arnhem, the 700 British troopers of 10th Para jumped despite the low ceiling and wind; at Son, the 34 Dutch commandos and about half of the force from the 101st Airborne jumped, before a rapidly strengthening ground wind forced the rest of the drop to be cancelled; at Groesbeek, the weather was so bad that only the Dutch commandos were able to jump.

Left: **1944. Passing through the city, the XXX Corps column has to struggle its way through tens of thousands of happy Eindhoven people. This half-track was pictured in Rechtestraat, in the very heart of the city. (J. Starink)**

Right: **1994. Today, Rechtestraat is a pedestrian area and it had seen no real traffic for over 30 years. However, for this one day, the municipality opened the street, so that the convoy could keep to the original route taken by XXX Corps 50 years ago.**

September 19, 1944. Five miles north of Eindhoven, the bridge at Son, blown on the first day, has been replaced overnight by a Bailey bridge by the 14th Company, RE, and the Grenadier Guards resume the advance to Nijmegen. (USNA)

After this somewhat disappointing Saturday, Sunday morning dawned dry, with even a watery sun shining through the thinning clouds. At 6.30 a.m., hundreds of military vehicles began to line up on the three-kilometre stretch of road between Leopoldsburg and Kattenbos, 20 kilometres south of the Belgian-Dutch border. With the first 75 vehicles lining up in single file and the remainder in double column, there was still not enough room for everybody and vehicles had to await their turn to join the procession. At 7.15 a.m., the column began to move off.

Only a few vehicles failed to show up, but in their place others had joined, and, in all, the column consisted of about 800 vehicles. There were two Sherman tanks and one Stuart light tank, scout cars, half-tracks, armoured cars, several DUKWs, artillery tractors, a score of Harley-Davidsons and other motorbikes, endless numbers of Jeeps, Dodges and GMCs, and a great variety of other trucks and lorries of all shapes and sizes. Almost without exception, the crews had taken the request for period costume at heart and almost everyone was dressed in green or khaki if not wearing original battle-dress complete with helmet, webbing and equipment.

September 18, 1994. A unique comparison of a crucial moment of Operation 'Market Garden': an original Sherman, albeit with 11th Armoured Division markings, leads the Corridor Tour across the modern bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal at Son.

At 8.45 a.m., exactly on schedule, the first vehicles reached Valkenswaard. Although a Sunday morning, the population had risen early and come out in numbers to watch the column pass through. In 1944, Valkenswaard was the first town reached by the Irish Guards after their difficult break-out from

1944. After Son, the XXX Corps advance finally developed the speed which had been hoped and expected of it from the start. The next village on the road to Nijmegen, Sint-Oedenrode, was reached within an hour. (Van de Ven)

1994. At the same spot in the village, a nicely-restored Daimler 'Dingo' scout car, fittingly marked with the insignia of the 2nd Household Cavalry, stands in for the Sherman Firefly of 50 years ago.

1944. Past Veghel, in the no man's land between the sectors held by the 101st and the 82nd Airborne Divisions, the tanks of the Grenadier Guards still make good time as they thunder through the hamlet of Mariaheide. (courtesy G. van Asseldonk)

1994. Another one-chance comparison. It must have been a long time since Sherman tanks last rolled through Mariaheide. For the veterans riding in the Corridor Tour, it was certainly an experience never to be forgotten.

the Meuse-Escaut bridgehead on September 17. Here, they paused for the night, the first of a series of costly delays on the road to Nijmegen. Fittingly, as the Corridor Tour passed through the town, it was exactly 50 years ago almost to the minute that the Guards, led by the scout cars of the 2nd Household Cavalry, had resumed their advance towards Eindhoven.

The next village was Aalst, where, on that second day, the Guards were again held up for hours by a few well-sited German 88mm guns. Despite a morning drizzle, the crowds lining the roads here now were as large as those at Valkenswaard, but they were small compared with the masses of people awaiting the tour at Eindhoven.

Here, tens of thousands had come out to see and cheer the column through the city. Unusual for this time of day, bars and cafés along the route were open and doing good business. Local music bands on temporary stages along the route played music of the 'forties to welcome the tour participants. It was a true recreation of what it looked like in 1944 and, to many older inhabitants, it brought back emotional memories.

There was another interesting parallel to be observed, here but also at other places. In 1944, the paratroopers of the 101st, marching down from Son on the morning of the 18th, were the first troops to enter Eindhoven. They were enthusiastically welcomed by the civilian population who crowded around them, offering food or drinks and asking for signatures. However, after the Guards had reached Eindhoven from the south late in the afternoon, and especially when the full might of XXX Corps came rolling through the city next day, all eyes of the population were on the endless columns of tanks, trucks and other vehicles. In this melee, the Americans appear to have somewhat dropped out of sight. Many pictures taken that day show the XXX Corps columns cheered on by thick lines of spectators thronging the roads while, a little to the rear, small groups of paratroopers can be seen, going about their business but seemingly forgotten by the crowds. Now, 50 years later, exactly the same phenomenon could be observed: as the Corridor Tour column wound its way through Eindhoven, here and there, aged men wearing the orange baseball caps marking them as veterans of the Screaming Eagles, could be seen standing back of the crowds, detachedly watching the procession, amused or silent in thoughts.

For this 50th anniversary, the municipality of Eindhoven had done an extraordinary thing. Most of the route taken by XXX Corps through the heart of the city was made a pedestrianised area in the 1960s, and this part of the corps' 'Club Route' — Rechtestraat and Demer — had seen no motor traffic for over 30 years, let alone heavy military vehicles. Now, for this one day, the seats and decorative flower-boxes of the shopping mall had been removed to allow the leading 75 vehicles, including the three tanks, to follow the exact historic route of 1944. The rest of the column took the inner-city ring-road, equally choked with spectators, and rejoined the other column on the other side of the shopping centre.

By the time the lead vehicles reached Son, the tour was running half an hour behind schedule. Son was where, in 1944, the bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal had been blown on the first day and where the Guards had had to stop late on the 18th while a new bridge was built. Seen thus, the planned one-hour stop of the tour column at Son could be seen as a fitting historic parallel to the events of that other September 18, 50 years ago.

Although Son is a much smaller town than Eindhoven, the crowds here were at least as impressive. Masses of people, six lines thick, stood in the verges to watch two original Sherman tanks lead the column across the modern canal bridge and into the village. As the double row of vehicles filled the village, the B-17 *Sally-B*, which had been unable to take off the day before, came roaring overhead — still a fitting moment, as, on this day 50 years ago, Eighth USAAF bombers (albeit B-24 Liberators) were used to drop supplies to the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions.

Like General Horrocks in 1944, the tour directors of 1994 realised that they should do something to make up for lost time. Therefore, the planned pause at Son was reduced to 30 minutes. By 11.45 p.m., the column, still with the two Shermans in the lead, was rolling through the cobblestone streets of Sint-Oedenrode. By now, the sun had broken through, the crews of the vehicles and the crowds were having a jolly good time, Dutch radio reporters travelling in the circus were on the air live, while TV camera crews marvelled at the opportunities for good action shots. If anything, the Market Garden Corridor Tour was turning into a great success.

From Sint-Oedenrode, the column turned left for a 15-kilometre detour to the west via the villages of Schijndel and Heeswijk-Dinther to Veghel. This was the tour's only diversion from the historic 'Club Route' of 1944. Then, the Grenadier Guards, who had

1944. For Operation 'Market Garden', the 84th Medium Regiment, RA, was attached to the Guards Armoured Division. Here, a 5.5in gun belonging to the regiment is towed through Uden. (Courtesy J. Sluijters)

1994. A less-heavy artillery combination, but this participant with his 25-pounder still makes for a remarkable comparison shot. By the time this picture was taken in Kerkstraat in Uden, the Corridor Tour was running well behind schedule.

Left: **1944. General Jim Gavin, the 82nd Airborne commander (right), and General 'Boy' Browning, commanding British I Airborne Corps (left), stand by the side of the road at Overasselt on the morning of September 19, awaiting the arrival of the XXX Corps spearhead. (IWM)** *Right:* **A few minutes later, the official 'link-up' handshake ceremony is over and the Shermans of the Guards Armoured roll past the same spot. (courtesy P. van Haren)**

taken over the lead from the Irish Guards at Son early on the 19th, had sped straight on from Sint-Oedenrode to Veghel by the direct road, taking less than an hour to cover the 20 kilometres between the two villages. However, although Schijndel and Heeswijk-Dinther lay off the Corridor itself, they had been important positions in the continued defence of 'Hell's Highway' by the 101st Airborne (and the 44th Royal Tank Regiment supporting them), especially between September 20-26, and since these communities were also commemorating the events of 50 years ago, their inclusion in the itinerary was well founded.

It was in this diversion and when getting back to the main road at Veghel that the Corridor Tour suffered the major breakdown of its time schedule. First, the leading vehicles took a wrong turn between Heeswijk-Dinther and Veghel and some time was lost before the route had been sorted out. Then, the crowds along this part of the route had grown so large as to seriously impede the planned rate of progress. Instead of the calculated length of 15 kilometres and passing time of 45-60 minutes, the column was by now stretching back for nearly 20 kilometres and taking nearly one and a half hour to pass.

1994. Fifty years later, Martijn Bakker seizes the moment to match both shots in a single picture. At other times, the building of the former Overasselt dairy factory in the background would form the only link with the past.

1944. The crew of a Humber scout car of the 1st (Motor) Battalion, Grenadier Guards, stops to talk to Colonel Bill Ekman of the 505th Parachute Infantry and his staff on Groesbeekseweg in Nijmegen. (Gavin Collection)

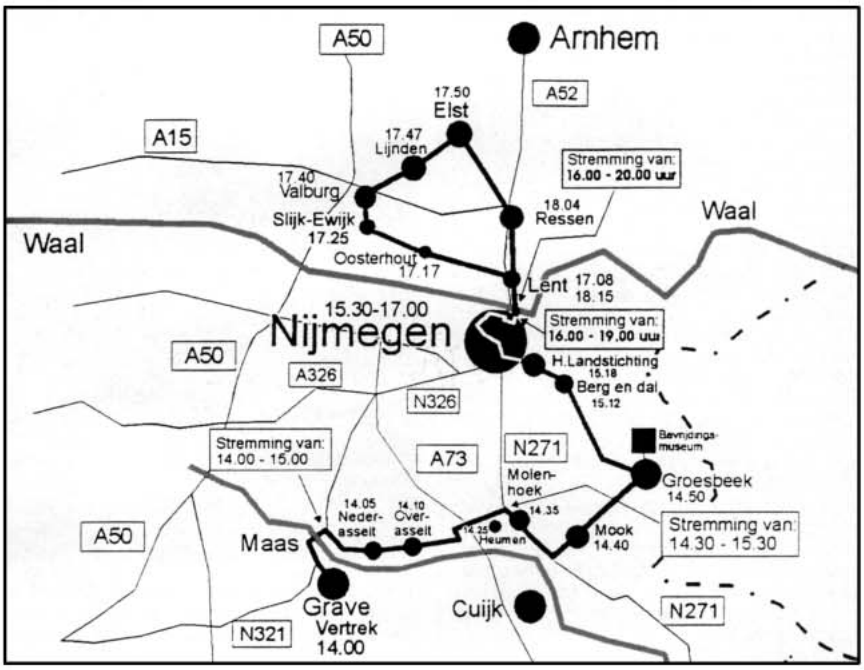
1994. Today, Groesbeekseweg, the road coming into the town from the south-east, is a much wider road and new trees mask the houses on the right, but this is the same spot. It has started to rain and the umbrellas are out. (M. Bakker)

Because of all the delay, the Corridor Tour arrived too late to deliver the Liberation Flame in time for the Waal crossing ceremony at the Nijmegen bridge, and the ceremony proceeded without it. First, American veterans restaged their legendary crossing opposite the Nijmegen power works, albeit this time in DUKWs instead of flimsy assault boats. (De Gelderlander)

Then, after unveiling a plaque at the bridge viaduct, Lord Carrington led a troop of four Shermans (his one, unfortunately, marked with Canadian instead of Guards Armoured insignia) across the bridge, in a re-enactment of the equally-legendary attack by Sergeant Robinson's troop of the 2nd Grenadier Guards 50 years earlier. (M. Molle)

From then on, the tour became a victim of its own success as, with each village, the time-lag grew. At Uden, the escorting police, not wanting the tank tracks to churn up the narrow and winding streets as they had done in 1944, directed the two leading Shermans out of the column (but forgot to do the same with the accompanying tank-transporters trailing them) and onto the bypass road. The DUKWs in the column were also taken out. As the column entered the town, all its churches rang their bells in a chiming welcome. In the main street, a local barkeeper unworriedly created his own traffic jam and much extra delay by coming out with full trays of beer and insisting that each passing vehicle stop and the crew empty at least one glass!

Beyond Uden and all the way to Grave, endless crowds waited patiently by the side of the road for the column to arrive — enduring showers of rain in a cheery, carnivalesque atmosphere. By the time the lead vehicles reached the big nine-span bridge over the river Maas at Grave, captured so successfully by the 82nd Airborne on the first day 50 years ago, the



Right: **The route for the final stage of the tour made the same dog-leg via Heumen as XXX Corps had to take in 1944.**

1944. The day after its capture, and with the situation at Arnhem now really desperate, the Guards Armoured push across the bridge in strength.

1994. Behind schedule like its predecessor but in a far happier mood, the Corridor Tour goes across the bridge in a grand finale.

1944. The 2nd Irish Guards roll across for a final, yet unsuccessful, attempt to reach Arnhem bridge. (USNA)

tour was well over two hours behind schedule. But what a glorious feast it was. The planned pause at Grave went by the boards and, in pouring rain, the vehicles came rolling across — somewhat erratic as, at places, the column had been split into groups by the enthusiastic crowds. Many of the veterans travelling in the vehicles refused to put on raincoats that would hide their blazers and medals, insisting that they should remain recognisable to the people who had waited so long to honour them.

By now, it was clear that the tour would not reach Nijmegen in time for the Waal crossing ceremony. At the Nijmegen bridge, a decision was made to proceed with the ceremonies there as planned but without the flame from the Liberty Torch which was still in the tour column. At 3.15 p.m., the DUKWs with the American veterans took to the water just east of Nijmegen, sailed underneath the road and rail bridges, past massed crowds on the town waterfront, and landed on the far bank near where the memorial to the assault crossing of 1944 stands on the river dyke road. Then, at 4.30 p.m., after unveiling a plaque at the viaduct under the bridge ramp, naming it 'Grenadier Guards Viaduct', Lord Carrington and a selected group of veterans boarded four Shermans and proceeded to cross the bridge, cheered on by throngs of spectators. After the meeting with the Americans on the Lent side of the bridge, all returned to the Nijmegen side for the ceremony on the bridge square, attended by many dignitaries, hundreds of veterans and thousands of spectators.

Meanwhile, the Corridor Tour had made surprising speed and lost no more time in its circuit through Overasselt and Heumen (where the historic drawbridge across the Maas-Waal Canal — the only one across the canal captured intact by the 82nd Airborne in 1944 — has been replaced by a modern one just two years ago), and on through Mook and Groesbeek to Nijmegen.

The entry into Nijmegen was again rapturous, on a par with the last day of the famous yearly Nijmegen Four Days' Marches, when the population turns out in thousands to cheer the tired walkers. Here, an estimated 200,000 lined the road. When, at last, the lead vehicles began crossing the bridge, it was 6 p.m. and drizzling. Although the official ceremony had already finished, throngs of people still crowded the bridge as the column came across. It was already getting late but none of the participants wanted to miss this part of the tour and all passed onto 'The Island', as it was called in 1944, for the circuit through Oosterhout, Valburg and Elst. The last vehicles did not get back to Nijmegen until well after dark. Here, the impressive array of vehicles parked in two double rows, filling the full length of the one-kilometre-long thoroughfare from the bridge to the Keizer Karelplein roundabout. The whole column had taken nearly 14 hours to reach the finish.

In a way, the Market Garden Corridor Tour had been a perfect one-day encapsulation of the historic event. Just as, in 1944, XXX Corps had been held up and arrived in Nijmegen late, so the tour column was delayed and reached Nijmegen behind schedule. The main difference was that in 1944 the delay was counted in days, whereas now it could be counted in hours; another difference, of course, being the absence of any German forces to cut the route.

It was generally agreed that the Corridor Tour was by far the high point of the 50th anniversary of 'Market Garden' in this part of Holland. The number of people that had come to watch it was estimated at well over a million. It had been a long day, but one filled with emotions and memories. For those who had been there in 1944, it had brought back strong memories: for the Dutch of joyful liberation; for the Allied veterans a renewed awareness of the great thankfulness of the Dutch people towards them. And for the younger generations, born after the war, it was a unique opportunity to experience something of what their parents saw and felt in those dramatic days 50 years ago.

Left: **1994. A long line of Jeeps stand in for the Shermans of yesteryear.** *Right:* **Larry Carne drives his restored Humber staff car over and on to Arnhem.**

The army, on the other hand, was less well represented. *They Were Not Divided* (1950), which was the story of two tank officers in the Welsh Guards from Normandy to Germany, stands out well for its specially shot footage of Shermans, Cromwells and a Tiger I, as well as library material of another Tiger and a PzKpfw IV lifted from the first Arnhem movie, *Theirs is the Glory* (1946) (see *After the Battle* No. 58). Leslie Norman's *Dunkirk* (1958) — with its beach scenes shot on the Welsh Gower Peninsula with the aid of National Servicemen to populate the beaches — was another army 'biggie', though one must not exclude the navy from the film's scenario. The other army pictures tended to be set in the desert, such as *The Desert Rats* (1953) or *Sea of Sand* (1958), though the latter, being about the Long Range Desert Group, more properly should fall into the third category: espionage/sabotage.

Depictions of military units performing acts of sabotage behind enemy lines were provided by *The Cockleshell Heroes* (1955), *Ill Met by Moonlight* (1956), *The Silent Enemy* (1958), and *They Who Dare* (1953) (which, due to its dubious credibility, was referred to by film industry wags as *'How Dare They'*) whereas the psychological warfare aspect was catered for by *The Man Who Never Was* (1955) (see *After the Battle* No. 54), and *I Was Monty's Double* (1958).

CARVE HER NAME WITH PRIDE

By Trevor Popple

For the five years between the end of the Second World War and the turn of the decade, film makers, quite wisely, stayed away almost entirely from producing war films. No doubt they felt that after six years of the real thing playing daily, the public would not be very receptive to being entertained by glorified dramatisations of it, and thus there was little or no financial return to be made. However, in 1950, the flood gates seemed to open in Britain and the USA, as the studios began to look back to the recent hostilities to plunder recent history for ideas for screenplays.

The British film industry in particular turned to war pictures which, with hindsight, seem to have fallen broadly into three categories: PoWs escaping; homages to military units; and espionage/sabotage or 'secret mission' films.

The first, which always seemed to keep the same group of actors employed (though that might be applied to all British war films generally), was typified by *The Wooden Horse* (1950), *Albert RN* (1953), and *The Colditz Story* (1954).

The second group, sometimes aided by the copious use of archive film footage, due in the main to budget restrictions, looked to extol the military efficiency of the three armed services. For the RAF, Bomber Command was lauded by two Lancaster films, *The Dam Busters* (1954) (see *After the Battle* No. 10), and the less remembered *Appointment in London* (1953). Fighter Command was in turn glamorised by *Angels One Five* (1952) (see *After the Battle* No. 30) and *Reach for the Sky* (1956) (see *After the Battle* No. 35), whilst the Navy was fêted in *The Cruel Sea* (1952), and *The Battle of the River Plate* (1956) (see *After the Battle* No. 40), which broke with the prevailing monochrome tradition by being photographed in wide-screen colour. In 1960, Kenneth More was to be seen overseeing naval operations in Lewis Gilbert's *Sink the Bismarck!* which continued the propensity for wide-screen, but eschewed colour in favour of archive film inserts.

Top: **Violette Szabo joined the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in October 1943 and went on her first mission as a member of F (French) Section on the night of April 5/6, 1944 as secret agent 'Louise' The origins of SOE began in March 1939 when tacit authority was given, in deadly secrecy, to counter Nazi predominance in small countries Germany had just conquered or was plainly threatening. Then, in July 1940, Winston Churchill invited Hugh Dalton, the Minister of Economic Warfare, to formally take charge of subversion, and on July 19, a secret document was signed by Neville Chamberlain (the former Prime Minister, then Lord President of the Council) formally establishing the new organisation.** *Above:* **Fifteen years after Violette joined SOE, a real ex-SOE agent, Odette Sansom, right, code-name 'Lise' (who had recently become Mrs Geoffrey Hallowes), joined the production of the film *Carve Her Name with Pride* to help Virginia McKenna (left) re-create the part of Violette. Odette's wartime exploits with SOE had already been recounted in the 1950 picture *Odette*, with Anna Neagle as the eponymous heroine. Virginia said of her contribution: 'Odette had herself suffered solitary confinement. She related her experiences to me, which made it much more real. She didn't let anything go by that was false. Just having her there on the set gave me confidence.'**

The film was made entirely in England by director Lewis Gilbert for the J. Arthur Rank organisation, which had its base at Pinewood Studios at Iver in Buckinghamshire. According to the screenplay, Violette *(left)* was working at Woolworths in 1940. She had in fact worked at the Oxford Street branch in London in 1937, but when war broke out in 1939 she was employed in the perfumery department of Bon Marche, a store in Brixton. Seeing as the scene *above* is set in the 'glorious summer' of 1940, it does not seem at all unreasonable for Virginia McKenna to be offering Lewis Gilbert a pair of six-penny sunglasses. In the film, the customer is Violette's girlhood friend, Winnie Wilson (later Mrs Winifred Sharpe).

But all these films, by the very nature of their content, were very much vehicles for men. Female rôles in war films tended to be incidental, resorting to the stereotypical girl friend, caring nurse, WAAF, etc. Consequently, the war films which have women, or a woman, at their core are precious few. And in the 'fifties they were *Odette* (1950) and *Carve Her Name with Pride*, of which the latter is the better remembered. Both of these were pictures about covert operations behind enemy lines, depicting agents gathering information and organising resistance. *Operation Amsterdam* (1958) also loosely falls into this group, as it told the story of the removal of industrial diamonds from Holland to Britain during the chaos following the rapid German advance in May 1940.

Odette, which was a tour de force for Anna Neagle, supported ably by the excellent Trevor Howard, was one of the first war

Above: **Violette Bushell's first meeting with Etienne Szabo in Hyde Park on July 14, 1940. An officer (Adjudant-Chef) with the French Foreign Legion, he had recently returned from Norway where the Légion had been fighting alongside British troops in Narvik. Now, London was full of servicemen from the countries overrun by the Germans, and Violette's mother, being French, had told Violette to find a French soldier and to invite him home to supper to celebrate Bastille Day. Little did Mr and Mrs Bushell know that Violette and Etienne would be married within five weeks on August 21 at Aldershot *(right)*. French actor Alain Saury was cast as Etienne, whilst Violette's friend Winnie (right) was played by Billie Whitelaw.**

Left: **'Mr Potter' (Sydney Tafler) of the 'Ministry of Pensions' interviews Violette as a potential candidate for recruitment into SOE. Due to time restrictions, the film leapt ahead from Etienne's departure for North Africa to the belated arrival in the spring of 1943 of the news of his death in Egypt some five months earlier. As a consequence, the picture omits Violette's time in the ATS between September 1941 and April 1942, where she operated a Vickers predictor with an anti-aircraft battery near Liverpool. Additionally, she worked in an aircraft factory at Morden in Surrey during the early part of 1943 in an attempt to take her mind off the gnawing fact that she had not heard from Etienne for some months. Potter's real identity was Captain Selwyn Jepson of the Buffs; he had been seconded from the Directorate of Military Intelligence to recruit secret agents. Before the war, he had been a successful writer of mystery stories with some of his books being turned into films. Jepson told author Rubeigh Minney, on whose book *Carve Her Name with Pride* was based, that the actual recruitment took place in Room 531 at No. 3 Sanctuary Buildings** *(right)*, **now No. 20 Great Smith Street, London. The old building has been demolished behind the façade to provide a plush new HQ for the Department of Education and Science.**

films of the 1950s, and told the story of Odette Churchill, GC, a French woman married to a British officer, who as an agent working in France was captured and tortured by the Gestapo. However, she was lucky enough to survive her experiences, unlike Violette Szabo (pronounced with a silent 'S'), the central character in *Carve Her Name with Pride*.

Violette was born in Paris in 1921, the daughter of an ex-British serviceman, Charles Bushell, who had married a French girl at the end of the First World War. Between the wars, the family alternated between France and Britain and, in the summer of 1932, finally settled in south London.

Violette spoke perfect French, spending her holidays in France, and was 18 years old when war broke out in 1939. A whirlwind courtship with a French officer, Lieutenant Etienne Szabo, led to their marriage in August 1940 before he was posted to North Africa with the French Foreign Legion.

In 1941, Violette joined the ATS, serving with an anti-aircraft battery until her discharge on maternity grounds the following year. Tania was born in June 1942 but Etienne was never to see his daughter as he was killed four months later at El Alamein.

In October 1943, Violette joined the Special Operations Executive (SOE) for which her background and perfect French made her ideally suited to be an agent. After training, she was parachuted into France for the first time in April 1944 to check on the strength of the Resistance group at Rouen. After three weeks, she was picked up and flown back to Britain by Lysander.

She returned to France on the night of June 7/8, this time to the Limoges area where the Resistance circuit was supposed to be strong and well-organised. However, while travelling by car from Sussac to Pompadour in the company of a local maquisard, Jacques Dufour (Anastasie), they bumped into a German checkpoint at the village of Salon-la-Tour. During the subsequent gun battle, Dufour escaped but Violette was captured.

Left: **Training at the Parachute School at Ringway, seen here re-created for the film at RAF Abingdon. A surprised Virginia McKenna is being congratulated by RAF instructor Flight Lieutenant Paul, who had taught her how to fall correctly although Lewis Gilbert seems to be already telling her how to do it better next time. Virginia did all her own stunts for the picture, with the exception of the two parachute jumps, which made perfect sense, if only from the point of view of insurance. Library footage of a Halifax was used to preface the jumps, although film of a Whitley, and subsequently a Liberator, would have been more appropriate.** *Right:* **On the night of April 5/6, 1944, Violette set out on her first mission to Occupied France — her final destination being Rouen. Accompanied by fellow agent Charles Staunton, she flew from RAF Tempsford near Sandy in Bedfordshire to be dropped by parachute. However, as Minney's book erroneously describes her being landed in France in a Lysander, this is the way it was depicted in the film. No operational Lysander was available so a de Havilland Beaver was brought in to play the part. The re-creation of Charles Staunton's involvement in the operation was covered by Paul Schofield's all-embracing character 'Captain Tony Fraser'. Vera Atkins (F Section's personal assistant to the head of SOE, Major Maurice Buckmaster), played by Avice Landone, is in uniform standing by the car.**

Paul Schofield as the fictitious 'Captain Tony Fraser', a character which was an amalgamation of at least two agents with whom Violette had worked, posing for a publicity still on the 'Paris/Rouen' set on the Pinewood backlot. It was quite a large structure with sections designed to look bombed out for some of the Rouen scenes. The area shown here was used to depict both cities, simply by altering the set dressing — the street signs, café canopies, etc.

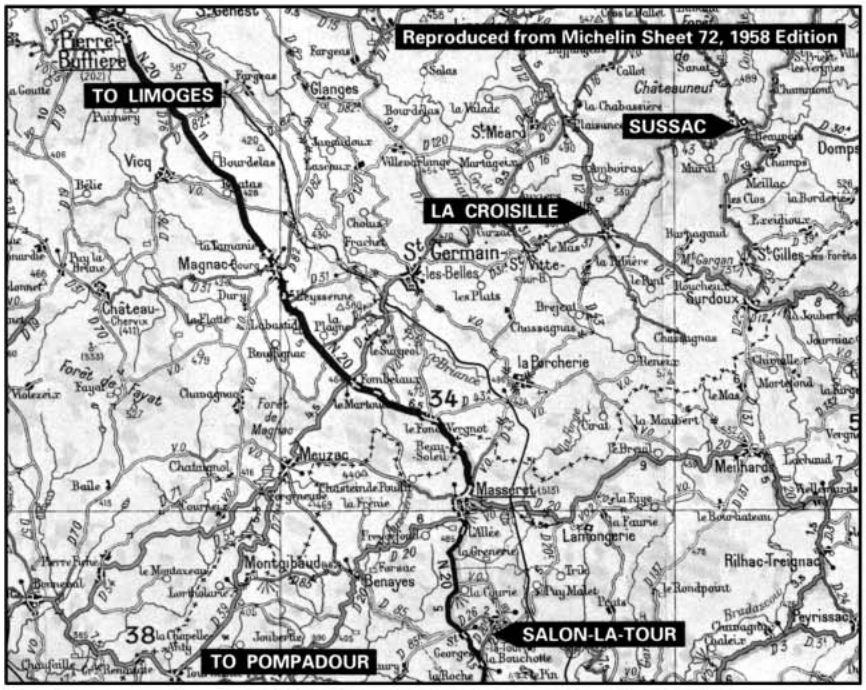
Violette was handed over to the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) and held in Fresnes prison, just outside Paris, being interrogated at the Gestapo headquarters in the city at No. 84 Avenue Foch. In August, just before Paris was liberated, she was transferred in the company of other prisoners who the Germans wanted to keep from falling into Allied hands, to Germany. During the journey, the train was attacked by Allied aircraft, Violette tending the wounded, manacled prisoners.

She was taken to the women's concentration camp at Ravensbrück, spending the following months at various other labour camps, until she was returned to Ravensbrück early in 1945 where she was executed.

The following year, the gallantry of her service with SOE was acknowledged when she became the first woman to be posthumously awarded the George Cross.

Ten years later, the story of Violette Szabo, GC, was brought to the public's attention by R. J. Minney, the prolific novelist, biographer, playwright and film producer, whose book, published in 1956, provided the film with not only the basis of the screenplay by Lewis Gilbert and Vernon Harris, but also its title.

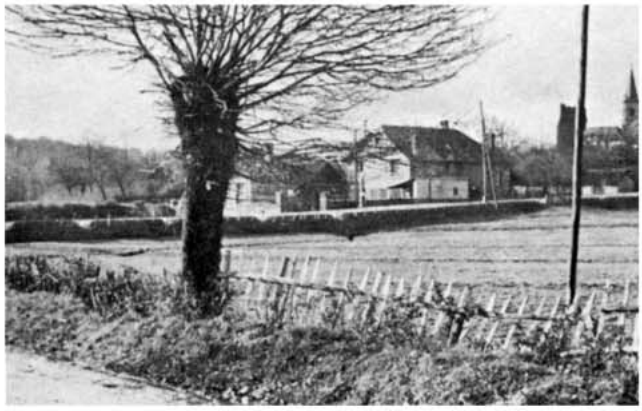
Virginia McKenna, who played Violette, was a contract player for the Rank Organisation in the 'fifties, and had made *A Town like*



Left: **The real 'Tony Fraser'. Philippe Liewer, French by birth, but better known as Charles Staunton, had worked as a journalist in France before the war. He accompanied Violette on both her missions, the second on the night following D-Day, to the staunch Maquis country around Limoges. They were dropped with two other agents, Robert Mortier and Jean-Claude Guiet, at Le Clos and taken to a hideout** *(above)* **in Sussac, a small village some 30 kilometres south-east of Limoges.**

Now that the Allies had landed in France, it was essential that concerted action be mounted against German reinforcements travelling to Normandy, and Staunton/Liewer gave Violette the job of liaising with the adjacent Maquis 'circuit', code-named 'Digger', under its leader Jacques Poirer ('Nestor'). The local Resistance leader was 'Anastasie' *(left)* — Jacques Dufour — who had already had a price put on his head by the Germans, and he said he would take Violette with her bicycle as far as Pompadour, about 50 kilometres away — about an hour's journey by car. They set out from Sussac at 9.30 a.m., stopping at La Croisille on the way to give a lift to a friend of Dufour, Jean Bariaud, who climbed in the rear seat. In his post-war report, Liewer explained that 'I saw them both off, made sure Dufour's Marlin [a UD M42] was in working order, and handed Szabo a Sten gun, loading two magazines for her, as she specifically insisted on carrying a weapon for the car journey.' To get to Pompadour, they would have to cross the N20, so Dufour planned to do this at Salon-la-Tour. *Right:* This car, which lies rusting in a field near the village, is reputed by some of the locals to be the one in which they were travelling.

Left: In the film, the giving of the lift to Bariaud is omitted, and the car appears without the bicycle. This part of the action was re-created at Burnham Beeches, in Buckinghamshire, not far from Pinewood. *Right:* Dufour later gave a report to Liewer on what had taken place: 'Nearing the village of Salon, we came, after a bend in the road, to a T-junction. At a distance of fifty yards, I saw we were coming to a road-block manned by German soldiers who waved me to stop. I instantly put out my arm and waved back, slowed down, and warned Violette to get prepared to jump out and run.'



'I stopped at 30 yards distance from the road block, jumped flat on the road surface by the car, and started shooting. I noticed Bariaud, who was unarmed, running away, but Violette had taken up a similar position to mine on the other side of the car, and was firing too. By that time, though, one of the three Germans had been hit and the other two were spraying us generously.'*Left:* Violette is said to have used this tree for cover. It stood on the right-hand side of the road but today *(right)* the tree has gone and conifers have grown up which screen part of the village.

In the film, Dufour is seen incorrectly armed with a pistol instead of a sub-machine gun. Note the member of the film crew peeping round the gatepost on the left.

The Buckinghamshire 'farm' looked quite French, although at no time did the pair actually use grenades against their pursuers. We are also told that Violette was wearing slacks.

Alice for them in 1956 for which she had won a British Film Academy Award. She had also made a number of pictures for other companies, including *The Cruel Sea* for Ealing Films which had starred Jack Hawkins.

Due to her blonde complexion, critics had dubbed her the 'English Rose', which, when combined with the obligatory RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art)-taught dialect of the period, led the public to presume she was rather prim. It was a description which she hated, because she was regarded by her peers as an accomplished stage and film performer, and a gifted comedy actress.

The success of *A Town like Alice* and *Carve Her Name with Pride* brought in many offers of work and, during the course of shooting the latter, she married the actor Bill Travers, with whom she subsequently made a number of pictures, most notably *Born Free* (1966), the story of George and Joy Adamson and Elsa the lioness.

Currently, Virginia McKenna is a trustee of the Born Free Foundation, having campaigned for many years for animal conservation, and she is also the author of several books on the subject. Not having given up acting entirely, she is also to be seen in the recent movie *Staggered* with Martin Clunes.

On seeing *Carve Her Name with Pride*, some critics made reference to the fact that key members of the film's production team were identical to those of the successful *Reach for the Sky* two years earlier. Certainly, both films shared the same producer, Daniel M. Angel, and director, Lewis Gilbert. This also extended to Gilbert's co-writer, Vernon Harris, and Art Director Bernard Robinson.

Various members of the supporting cast had also appeared in the earlier film: Sydney Tafler, previously Robert Desoutter, the artificial limb maker, was now the enigmatic Mr Potter, supposedly from the Ministry of Pensions; Raymond Francis, once the official who had told Douglas Bader he would never fly again, was now offering Virginia McKenna a suicide pill before she embarked on what was to be her final mission; Anne Leon, who as Sister Thornhill had nursed Bader through the critical hours following the first amputation, was now destined to accompany Virginia to the firing squad; Harold Lang, no longer a German doctor in the hospital at St Omer, was now a German officer travelling on a French train with Virginia; and Avice Landone, having played Douglas Bader's mother, was now cast as Vera Atkins, one of Potter's aides.

If British war films of the 'fifties are thought of as having virtually the same cast, while this is not strictly true, some films would not be considered complete without certain faces performing to type: one such face being Victor Maddern. Maddern was part of the legion of reliable, working class, 'other ranks' stereotypes always cast as a private, able seaman, or AC2. He certainly never rose above the rank of sergeant. Sam Kydd was another such actor, so were Michael Ripper, Harry Fowler and Harry Locke. Bill Owen is another example, and as such he appears as Violette Szabo's unarmed combat instructor.

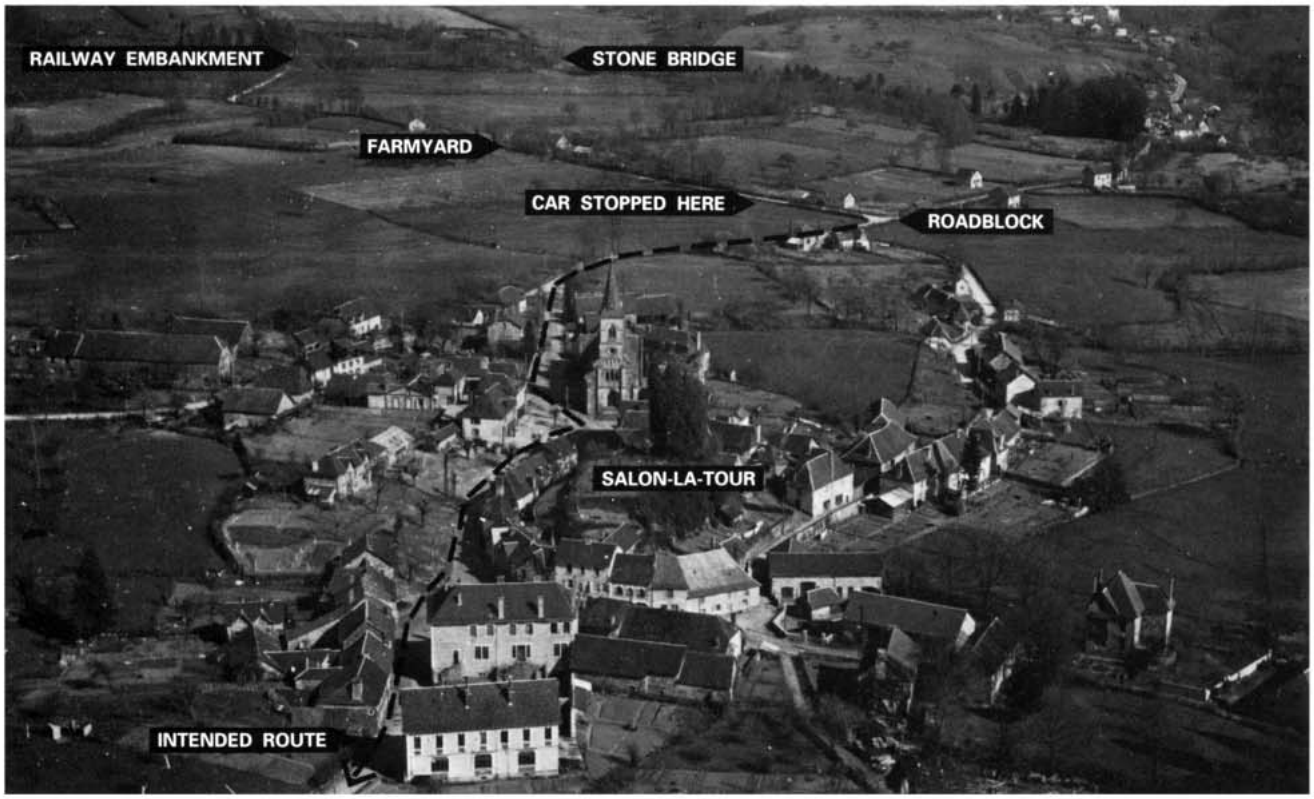
But Maddern with his distinctive crooked leer was everywhere: in *Angels One Five* he was a grumbling erk complaining about clearing bomb damage at RAF Neethely; in *Dunkirk* he was an embittered merchant seaman, deeply resentful toward those exploiting the war at home; and in *Sink the Bismarck!* he had the film's closing line. For *Carve Her Name with Pride*, however, Maddern was cast as Violette's sergeant parachute instructor.

There were other 'faces' in the cast, who were familiar then, and remain familiar today. Apart from Bill Owen, now typecast as Compo in the BBC's *Last of the Summer Wine*, there was the ubiquitous Billie Whitelaw, currently to be seen in ITV's *Firm Friends*; Miriam Karlin, known now as the ghost in the BBC's *So Haunt Me*, but best remembered for her acerbic union official Paddy in *The Rag Trade*; and Andre Maranne who has been on call whenever a Frenchman is required in a British production. When he was not working with Peter Sellers' Inspector Clouseau, he was supplying the infamous Basil Fawlty with roast duck for his disastrous gourmet evening.

One actor, whose most famous rôle has now become a byword for Civil Service smug elitism and plodding bureaucracy, appeared in one scene as a virtual extra. Nigel Hawthorne, now instantly recognised as Sir Humphrey Appleby in the BBC's *Yes Prime Minister*, is to be seen fleetingly as an off-duty soldier who smiles at Violette.

There remains one casting curiosity. William Mervyn plays Major (later Colonel)

The Germans are believed to have been from I. Bataillon, SS-Panzergrenadier-Regiment 'Deutschland', carrying out a search for SS-Sturmbannführer Helmut Kämpfe, the commander of the regiment's third battalion, who had been captured by the Maquis. Violette and Dufour jumped a fence to a farm and ran through the yard and out into the fields beyond. *Left:* **Virginia's Violette makes a run for it.** *Right:* **At Salon-la-Tour, Madame Jean Tisserand and her son Albert indicate the direction taken by the fugitives across the real farmyard in June 1944.**



'I ordered Violette to retreat through a wheat field, towards a wood 400 yards away, under cover of my fire. As soon as she had reached the high wheat she resumed firing, and I took advantage of it to fall back. At first, the going was good, as we walked, bending so as not to show our heads over the top of the wheat, but soon we heard the rumble of armoured cars, and machine guns began spraying close to us as they could follow our progress by the movement of the wheat. So we had to continue our progress towards the wood crawling flat and cautiously on the ground, an exhausting and awfully slow process. Then we heard infantry running up the road and entering the wheat field while other armoured cars went driving around it. So we had to resume firing each in turn to cover the other's progress, to keep the infantrymen from running up to us. When we weren't more than 30 yards from the edge of the wood, Violette, who by then had her clothes all ripped to ribbons and was bleeding from numerous scratches all over her legs, told me she was exhausted and could not go an inch further. She insisted she wanted me to try and get away; that there was no point in my staying with her. So I went on while she kept on firing from time to time.'

Maurice J. Buckmaster, head of the French Section of SOE, although his voice has been dubbed over by another actor, Geoffrey Keen, because Mervyn was not available for the post-action, re-recording session. Mervyn was, like so many, a familiar face, and remembered best for his rôle as the bishop in the BBC's *All Gas and Gaiters*, with Derek Nimmo and Robertson Hare. Keen was also a regular (*Angels One Five*, *Sink the Bismarck!*, etc.) and, in more recent years, he has been seen in some of the James Bond films, particularly those made after Bernard 'M' Lee had died.

On June 10, 1944, two days after parachuting into France, Violette Szabo set out on the journey which was to cast her into the hands of the Gestapo.

The Maquis were planning a series of ambushes in the Corrèze and Dordogne areas to hinder the advance of German forces as they moved toward the invasion area in Normandy. Violette was to be taken by Jacques Dufour by car to set up a meeting with the adjacent Resistance group. It should have been a straightforward mission but they came up against a road-block as they approached Salon-la-Tour, a village just off the N20 from Toulouse to Limoges, one of the main roads being used by the German reinforcements. In the ensuing gun battle, she was captured, whilst Dufour managed to get away.

The film structured the start of the fight a little differently: having stopped in a lane to talk to a local Maquis member, Violette and Jacques hear a German despatch rider approaching. They decide to stay and bluff it out should he stop and ask questions, but this plan is wrecked when the partisan suddenly shoots the German out of his saddle with a rifle. A second German motorcyclist appears

'Run, run! For God's sake, run!' Violette's last words to Jacques Dufour (Maurice Ronet). At this point, the film location moves nearer to home — to Black Park which lies directly behind the studios and is a setting which has been used in many films made at Pinewood. *Right:* **The camera operator, Harry Gillam, gets down for a low shot of Virginia falling.**

Above: **Violette insists that Dufour leave her behind and make his escape while she turns to face the approaching Germans alone.** *Below:* **Her last stand is said to have been made at the base of the smaller of these two trees on the edge of the field, seen here in the 1950s.**

Above: **Backs to the wall . . . or, in this case, Blackpark Lake across which we see in the film Dufour swimming to safety.** *Below:* **Backs to the tree at Salon-la-Tour. The two trees have since been removed; Albert Tisserand indicates where they once stood.**

and skids to halt, having seen the body of his companion sprawled in the road, and draws his pistol. Violette and Jacques have no choice but to fight, and Jacques shoots the German dead with his pistol — not a sub-machine gun, which the real Jacques Dufour had been carrying. In the exchange, the radiator of the car is holed, so there is no chance of a quick getaway, and Germans travelling on the main road, having heard the shooting, send armoured cars and infantry to investigate. Again the film departed from Minney's biography and has Violette and Jacques destroy an armoured car with grenades before accurately re-creating the frenzied chase across the countryside.

The elements of the panzer division were represented by some trucks plus three armoured cars. These were generously covered with netting and foliage that obscured their identity, though it is also possible that some level of structural disguise had been employed because one of them had become a reasonably passable SdKfz 221. The vehicle hit by the grenades was probably a Daimler scout car, but the view of it was fleeting.

None of this re-created mayhem was filmed in France, however. Quiet, rural Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire, about halfway between Beaconsfield and Slough, was briefly 'twinned' with Salon-la-Tour, simply because it was relatively convenient to Pinewood Studios at Iver.

And it was at Violette's point of capture that yet another connection with *Reach for the Sky* was to manifest: one of the two soldiers who arrest her had performed the self-same act on Kenneth More after he had been found hiding in the barn in St Omer. Also, it must be added, all the German troops in this sequence were dressed in Wehrmacht and not Waffen-SS uniforms.

In pain, unable to run, and her ammunition exhausted, Violette was captured by soldiers of the 'Deutschland' regiment though it is worth noting that in the film all the soldiers were wearing army uniform, not SS. The extra playing the soldier in the centre of the group briefly enjoyed a mini-career arresting British film stars around the Home Counties: two years previously, he had taken Kenneth More into custody at Cowley on the Grand Union Canal in *Reach for the Sky*.

After her capture, Violette was taken east, parallel with the railway embankment, to where a small stone bridge crosses the main line from Paris to Toulouse. Two armoured cars had been called up and she was taken away in one of them. Meanwhile, Jacques Dufour lay hidden a few feet away beneath a haystack — M. Tisserand points at the spot. When it was dark, Dufour climbed out and went to the farmhouse on the far side of the bridge.

After capture came the inevitable interrogation, initially at Gestapo headquarters in Limoges, and later at the Sicherheitsdienst building at No. 84 Avenue Foch in Paris. The interrogation scenes in the film were very powerful, with Virginia McKenna displaying both terror and contempt for her captors. The horror of the torture sequence was made the more harrowing by the use of off-camera sound and cries cross-cut with the facial reactions of the interrogator (Noel Willman), rather than blatant visual violence. Violette's torturer, though barely seen in the film, was played by John Heller (right) who, due to his fluency in German, appeared in a number of war pictures including *Sink the Bismarck* and *Kelly's Heroes*.

Aviation content within the film was contained within four sequences. For Violette's first parachute jump at RAF Abingdon, which was doubling for the parachute school at Ringway near Manchester, archive footage of a Handley Page Halifax B Mk III was inserted. Later, this same clip, suitably darkened down to simulate night, was used to depict the flight for her second and last mission. In reality, Violette's four-hour journey to the Limoges area on the night of June 7/8 had been in an American-crewed Liberator.

Whilst model work provided the Mosquitos which attacked the train (also a model) carrying Violette and other prisoners to Germany, the only re-created aeronautical contribution to the film was that depicting the flight taking Violette on her first mission to France — although in reality she went in by parachute.

The ideal type would have been a Westland Lysander, but this was not to be the case. Instead, an example of the ubiquitous de Havilland Beaver, which fitted the same basic requirements, i.e. a high wing, radial-engined monoplane, was employed for the night sequence of taxying out, crossing the Channel, and landing. This machine sported a distinctive — but inappropriate — Type A roundel on the fuselage sides, the call letter T, and the squadron codes LX of No. 225 Squadron, which its Lysanders carried until early 1942. Also, this aircraft was supposed to be re-creating a flight which took place in the spring of 1944, but during this period the LX code letters were allocated to Beaufighters of No. 54 Operational Training Unit. By the time that Violette flew to France, No. 225 Squadron was operating its WU-coded Spitfires in the Mediterranean.

Apart from Burnham Beeches, RAF Abingdon and the London locations, the bulk of the film was shot within the Pinewood Studios complex — either on a sound stage, or on the back lots. The combined set for the scenes depicting Paris and the ruins of Rouen was erected there for the film, as was the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

The picture was premièred at the Leicester Square Theatre on February 20, 1958, and the following day the *News Chronicle* newspaper published a piece written by film critic Paul Dehn and headed: 'THIS IS NOT THE TRUTH . . . You've carved her name with fiction Mr Angel'.

Dehn was writing from a position of some authority: he had been a member of SOE as an instructor for most of the war, and had been connected with the film industry prior to its outbreak. He was well regarded by his contemporaries in the military for his work, as well as for his vivid imagination and sense of humour.

Essentially, the article listed the film's deviations from Minney's book, and pointed all the blame at Daniel Angel. By exonerating the written contributions of Harris and Gilbert, as well as Gilbert's direction, Dehn's article took on the shape of a personal attack upon the producer alone, seeming to conveniently ignore the collaborative aspects of film production.

One prime criticism levelled by Dehn was the creation of Paul Schofield's rôle as agent 'Captain Tony Fraser', who was indeed a fictitious character, though he was not sniping at the actor's performance. 'Fraser' was basically a merging of two real agents: Charles Staunton and Harry Peulevé.

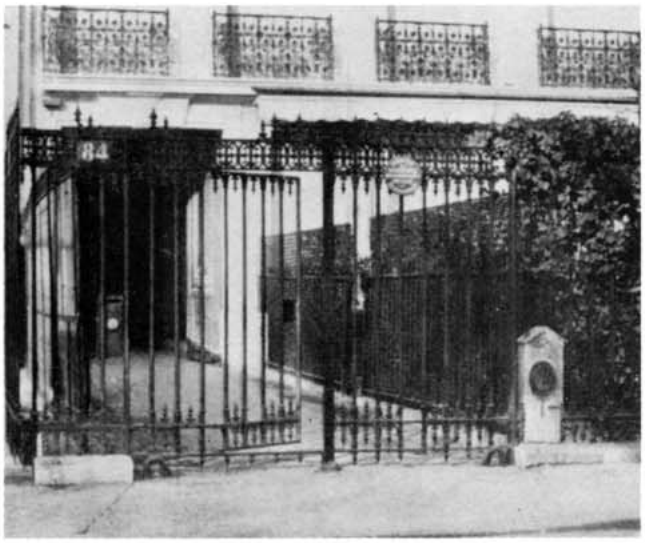
The creation of a constant fictitious character in a biographical screenplay is usually a means of absorbing several people who have passed through the life of the central figure. It keeps the cast list down to manageable proportions, and allows the audience to concentrate on the story in hand, rather than ingesting new portrayals who appear, deliver a couple of lines, and disappear.

Reach for the Sky, for example, spanned nearly 20 years of Douglas Bader's life. Paul Brickhill's book on which it was based was packed with people who came and went, but the film compressed many of them into a single fictitious creation: 'Johnny Sanderson'.

Bader himself was deeply embarrassed by the omissions and alterations to his life story not for himself, but for his friends and colleagues in the RAF who might be offended. Not being conversant with the film-making process, he was at loggerheads with Angel throughout the production, until he virtually dissociated himself from the picture, choosing to play golf at St Andrews in Scotland, rather than attend the London première. But interestingly, Angel and Gilbert placed a caption at the beginning of the picture, admitting the many changes, apologising to anyone who might take offence.

It must also be added that Lewis Gilbert was also accused by veterans of inaccuracies in his later picture *Sink the Bismarck!*

This is the prison on the Place du Champ de Foire in Limoges, although today the square has been renamed Place Winston Churchill. When Staunton (Liewer) learned what had happened, according to Minney, he went to Salon-la-Tour that evening to make further enquiries. Dufour was still in hiding, although the Germans had spread the news that they had captured him as well. The next day, Staunton heard from Limoges that two Resistance men had seen a girl, limping badly, enter the gaol there, and that she had been taken across the road to the local Gestapo headquarters for questioning. Staunton immediately began planning a rescue attempt but, by the time they were ready to go into action, Violette had been moved to Paris.



Fresnes prison *(left)* on the southern outskirts of Paris, and the SD HQ at No. 84 Avenue Foch *(right)*, were two places not depicted in the film, being only obliquely referred to during the train journey to Germany . . . which ended at Ravensbrück.

Paul Dehn's list of objections also included the frequency and romantic overtones of the meetings between Violette and 'Fraser'; the comic attack upon the CO of her training unit; the meeting with the German officer on the train; and the portrayal of her enlistment into SOE. Dehn maintained that she would have never been recruited had it been initially known that she was a widow and mother.

Above: **For the picture's grim denouement, it was necessary to build a section of Ravensbrück concentration camp at Pinewood but, with good planning of shots, it was only necessary to erect what was strictly required in vision. Models are always made beforehand so that the director can approve the design, and this one shows the buildings on the left side and immediate foreground as being pure façades.** *Centre:* **This still is from a montage sequence used to depict the conditions within the camp. The area's relationship to the overall structure can be verified by the guard tower and its position at the far end of the model.** *Right:* **The same area seen from the reverse angle from the tower betrays the illusion, showing the incomplete façades erected on scaffolding. The real Ravensbrück is situated 75 kilometres north of Berlin, close to Lake Fürstenberg, and construction had started in 1939 for what was intended solely as a women's camp designed to hold 6,000 inmates. However, at the time Violette reached the camp, numbers had doubled and, by January 1945, around 36,000 were incarcerated there.**

L–R: Denise Bloch (Nicole Stephane), Lillian Rolfe (Anne Leon) and Violette walk through the camp compound to the place of execution. Both of the women with Violette were real-life characters; they had been wireless operators with the French section of SOE, and had met Violette in Fresnes prison. The trio was to stay together, moving from camp to camp, up to the end. The film, however, brought their initial meeting forward to the period of Violette's training for SOE. The film also changed the details of their execution: whereas in reality they were each shot in the back of the neck, for the picture they were mown down by a single soldier with a Schmeisser machine pistol.

A week later, he wrote another piece about the film. In it, he pointed out that Violette was a brunette and, had she been as blonde as Virginia McKenna, she would have been arrested on suspicion the minute she stepped into Occupied France. He also criticised Miss McKenna's Cockney accent: according to him, Violette spoke 'ordinary English with a slight French cadence', and he also commented adversely upon the way Violette's execution was portrayed.

Another of his protestations concerned the film's inclusion of a poem, *The Life That I Have*. Dehn, himself a poet, dismissed it as an 'indifferent English love-poem plugged four times in the picture's course like a cheap theme song'. Consequently, he seriously doubted whether Violette had memorised it as the key to her double transposition cipher before leaving for France. The film, of course, lent the poem a great poignancy by depicting its author as Violette's late husband. However, the National Film Theatre notes, written by Tony Staples, for a subsequent showing of the picture, shone a different light upon the piece of verse. He asserted that, although not mentioned in Minney's book, the poem was not invented for the film, but written specially for Violette by Leo Marks, the codemaster for SOE. Marks later explained that: 'We had to compose original poems as the basis for each agent's code. If we had used published poems, the Germans would easily have cracked the code.' Prior to the film, Marks had always refused to let the poem *(see back cover)* be made public.

Staples also went on to freely concede that Schofield's character 'Fraser' had been a fabrication, describing the picture as being basically factual, and that it was part of a genre of British war pictures within which it was acceptable 'to invent characters and incidents if it were thought necessary to do so in order to make the story more dramatic'.

Clearly this was a genre with which Dehn was not happy, certainly as far as the story of Violette Szabo was concerned. In answer to his criticisms of the invented scene in which the news of Etienne Szabo's death in Egypt arrives by telegram during his daughter Tania's birthday party, Staples maintained that both events had occurred, although not on the same day. He added that 'the film makers felt that these changes, and the others that they made, were quite permissible because they in no way undermined the film's basic intention, which was to pay tribute to the courage of Violette and her colleagues'. Virginia McKenna later said of the film: 'We knew that it wasn't all the literal truth, but we certainly tried our best to recreate the *spirit* of Violette's truth'.

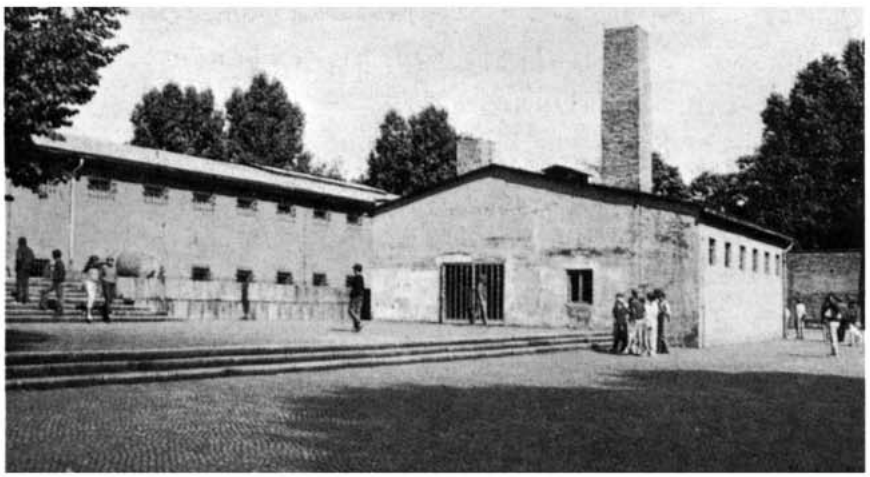
Whilst that sentiment is no doubt true, the fact remains that the film makers' rôle is to tell a good story which will fill cinema seats: it is simply a business.

Real life has a habit of being mundane until it is viewed with hindsight, and the exciting elements are extracted, isolated and compressed, or even enhanced or exaggerated for for retelling by word or film. The viewer always enjoys a good story which is well told, even so, where historical events are concerned, one should always be aware that, to bring such a story to the screen, someone somewhere will have invariably compromised on the facts of that story. Unfortunately, it is usually the film account which stays in the popular consciousness, simply because of repeat showings on television. The factual account tends to languish in a lost, dusty book.

But even in real life, things are not always what they seem to be. The citation written in December 1946 to go with the award of the George Cross to Violette describes the final stand as taking place in a house. This is difficult to explain as there were several eyewitnesses to the gun battle at Salon-la-Tour.

Madame Szabo volunteered to undertake a particularly dangerous mission in France. She was parachuted into France in April 1944, and undertook the task with enthusiasm. In her execution of the delicate researches entailed she showed great presence of mind and astuteness. She was twice arrested by the German security authorities, but each time managed to get away. Eventually, however, with other members of her group, she was surrounded by the Gestapo in a house in the south-west of France. Resistance appeared hopeless, but Madame Szabo, seizing a Sten gun and as much ammunition as she could carry, barricaded herself in part of the house, and, exchanging shot for shot with the enemy, killed or wounded several of them. By constant movement she avoided being cornered and fought until she dropped exhausted. She was arrested and had to undergo solitary confinement. She was then continuously and atrociously tortured, but never by word or deed gave away any of her acquaintances, or told the enemy anything of value. She was ultimately executed. Madame Szabo gave a magnificent example of courage and steadfastness.

LONDON GAZETTE, DECEMBER 17, 1946



A stone tablet at Ravensbrück (formerly within the German Democratic Republic) purports to mark the spot where the executions took place. However, testimony taken by Vera Atkins during her investigation in 1946 into the deaths of the three girls, published by the Special Forces Club in 1993, reveals that the killings by 'an SS Lance-Corporal Schult or Schulter' took place at the end wall of the crematorium. As that end of the building has since been demolished, the actual spot — unmarked — lies right in the foreground of this photo.

Left: **Wearing the dress that her mother had bought for her at the Trois-Quartiers in Paris during the course of her first mission, 4-year-old Tania Szabo receives the George Cross on behalf of her late mother from His Majesty King George VI on January 28, 1947. The French government awarded Violette a posthumous Croix de Guerre that year as well. The pretty young actress playing the part is not named in the film credits, but we tracked her down . . . now the Honorary British Consul in Nice, Pauline Challoner.** *Right:* **The real Tania displays the award outside Buckingham Palace.**

The film portrayal of her execution was also inaccurate: Squadron Officer Vera Atkins had taken a statement from Johann Schwarzhuber, the Deputy Camp Commandant, in March 1946 describing Violette's execution by a neck shot.

Later, in December, a British Military Court opened in Hamburg to try 13 former members of the camp staff, of whom 11 were subsequently executed.

Carve Her Name with Pride is now one of that vast array of British films from the post-war era which has been creeping out on television on weekend afternoons since the mid-sixties. With its excellent performances from the principal cast, the film remains an entertaining piece of work, and even with all its departures from the original biography it does, as Virginia McKenna said, carry 'the spirit of . . . truth', in depicting the essential heroic deeds of Violette Szabo — an extremely brave young woman.

Right: **Tania is held up by Odette, then Mrs Peter Churchill, to see the memorial tablet, which included her mother's name, unveiled at St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge (see also *After the Battle* No. 85) by Princess Alice on May 7, 1948.**

Left: **After the award ceremony, Tania returns home to 18 Burnley Road, Brixton, with her grandparents, played by Denise Gray and Jack Warner — just about the only authentic location seen in the film . . . except that No. 18 lies on the opposite side of the street! Its façade on the right is now adorned with one of London's historic Blue Plaques.**

The life that I have
Is all that I have
And the life that I have
Is yours

The love that I have
Of the life that I have
Is yours and yours and yours

A sleep I shall have
A rest I shall have
Yet death will be but a pause

For the peace of my years
In the long green grass
Will be yours and yours
And yours

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